



THE
ROMAN EMPRESSES
VOL. I



The assassination of Caesar in the Senate

From the painting by Georges Roussou

THE
ROMAN EMPERORS

THE HISTORY OF THE LIVES AND SECRET IN-
TRIGUES OF THE WIVES OF THE TWELVE CAESARS
WITH HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL NOTES

By
JACQUES BOERGAS DE SERVIEZ

From the Original Translation Done in 1752 by
THE HON. BYSSE MOLESWORTH

ILLUSTRATED FROM PAINTINGS BY
GEORGES ROCHEGROSSE

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME I



Printed for Subscribers Only

NEW YORK
DINGWALL-ROCK, LTD.

COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY
THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC.

OWNED BY
DINGWALL-ROCK, LTD.
NEW YORK

1932

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I

	PAGE
PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT	vii
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	ix
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR	xi
PUBLISHER'S HISTORICAL NOTE	xv
CALPURNIA, <i>Wife of Julius Cæsar</i>	3
LIVIA, <i>Wife of Augustus</i>	28
JULIA, <i>Wife of Tiberius</i>	89
LIVIA ORESTILLA, LOLLIA PAULINA, and CÆSONIA, <i>Wives of Caligula</i>	117
LIVIA ORESTILLA, <i>Wife of Caligula</i>	126
LOLLIA PAULINA, <i>Second Wife of Caligula</i>	129
CÆSONIA, <i>Third Wife of Caligula</i>	138
VALERIA MESSALINA, <i>Wife of Claudius</i>	146
AGRIPPINA, <i>Second Wife of Claudius</i>	177
OCTAVIA, <i>Wife of Nero</i>	226
POPPÆA, <i>Second Wife of Nero</i>	253
MESSALINA, <i>Third Wife of Nero</i>	283
LEPIDA, <i>Wife of Galba</i>	299
POPPÆA, <i>Wife of Otho</i>	307
GALERIA FUNDANA, <i>Wife of Vitellius</i>	308
DOMITILLA, <i>Wife of Vespasian</i>	324
MARCIA FURNILLA, <i>Wife of Titus</i>	336
DOMITIA, <i>Wife of Domitian</i>	343
AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY, THE FIRST EMPRESSES	355
PLOTINA, <i>Wife of Trajan</i>	360

PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

THIS remarkable work, which was originally written in French, is from the pen of Jacques Boergas de Serviez, of whom some account is given further on. It passed through several editions, and it was not long before an English translation appeared—not more than five years after the publication of the first French edition. This, however, was not a complete version,* containing, according to the title-page, only *The Lives and Amours of the Empresses, Consorts to the First Twelve Cæsars of Rome . . .* translated by G. James, London, 1723. In 1752, a complete translation of the work was issued, the full title of which is: *The Roman Empresses, or the History of the Lives and Secret Intrigues of the Wives of the Twelve Cæsars, of those of the other Roman Emperors and of the Princesses of their Blood*, in which are introduced the most remarkable transactions of the Roman History, collected from ancient authors—Greek and Latin, with historical and critical notes . . . translated by the Hon. Byssie Molesworth. London, printed for R. Dodsley in Pall Mall, 1752. This work is an extremely rare one, and it is upon it that the present translation is based; considerable alterations (and it is to be hoped improvements) have, however, been made, antiquated orthography has been corrected, and such forms of expression as have become entirely obsolete have been altered, while, at the same time, care has been taken not to spoil the quaint flavour of the original translation. In some few cases, the translator appears to have mistaken the meaning or to have given too French a turn to the phraseology. The book is unique of its kind, and could

* Apparently, the complete French work was not published until 1728.

hardly have been expected from any one but a Frenchman. Although the title is somewhat ambitious, it is in reality borne out by the work itself, which gives abundant evidence of diligent study of the authors dealing with the history of the period:—Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Herodian, the *Scriptores Historiæ Augustæ*, and others. The work, in fact, contains an interesting and essentially popular account of the times, while laying especial stress upon the virtues and vices of the *beau sexe*.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

WHILST the republic of Rome maintained her liberties, the Roman ladies were not distinguished one from another but by their beauty and wit, their virtue and their courage. As they were excluded from dignities, it was only by their personal merit that they made themselves considerable, and acquired glory. Lucretia got herself a great name by her chastity in giving her husband, at the expense of her life, an heroic instance of her innocence; and, in the vengeance which she took on herself for the crime of Tarquin's son, she left the ladies a model of conjugal fidelity, which we do not find that many have afterwards copied.

Cloelia and her companions made themselves famous for their courage, boldness, and love for their country, as did Porcia, Cato's daughter, by swallowing burning coals, in order to procure to herself that death which her friends would have hindered her from; but she deceived the vigilance of those who watched her, by that action which has made so much noise in history. But, from the time that the Emperors made themselves absolute masters of the republic, their wives shared with them their grandeur, their glory, and their power; the Roman people, being then given up to flattery as much as they had formerly been jealous of their liberty, strove to give the Empresses pompous and magnificent titles, and to decree them extraordinary and excessive honours. One might then see the Emperors' wives honoured with the titles of August and Mothers of their Country. Some of them had a seat in the senate, governed Rome and the empire, gave audience to the ambassadors, and disposed of posts and employments; others were consecrated priestesses, and even exalted to the rank of goddesses.

It is of these Empresses that this book treats; and particular care has been taken to distinguish those who were of, or who were married into, Augustus's family, because they were the most remarkable. All the facts here reported are taken from original authors; and, for our justification, as much care as possible has been taken throughout, to quote our authorities.

In speaking of the Empresses, it would to be sure have been very difficult to be quite silent as to the Emperors; we have even enlarged upon some of these princes, because we do not doubt but many, who may peruse this book, will not be at all sorry to find in it a part of their history. If I have not mentioned all that might have been said of these Empresses, I believe I have, at least, reported as much as was necessary to make them known. To say the truth, I have been sometimes almost tempted to suppress a great many things which I have, nevertheless, been obliged to touch upon, but yet with all the regard to decency a man can have, who would be extremely sorry to offend against the rules of good manners. But I hope that nobody will have any great reason to blame me upon that subject, since, even in the most shameful passages of these Empresses' lives, I have carefully avoided making use of any shocking expressions.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR

JACQUES BOERGAS DE SERVIEZ, Seigneur of Serviez, Sagde, Truscas and Campredon, Chevalier of the Royal Military and Hospitalier Orders of Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel, and of St. Lazare of Jerusalem, was born at St. Gervais, a little town of Languedoc, on the 16th of April, 1679. He belonged to an ancient and noble family. After having spent two years with the Bishop of St. Pons, the celebrated Montgaillard, who gave him a careful education, he continued his studies at the University under Causse, at the time one of the most illustrious professors in Europe.

After this, he travelled for some years, during which he stayed some time at Rome. Here, before the Sacred College, he pleaded the cause of Madame Guillermin, a Dominican nun, who protested against her vows. He succeeded in securing her freedom for her, although she had allowed the *quinquennium*, or period of five years, to elapse without protesting, and had been thirty-two years a nun.

On his return home, Serviez devoted himself entirely to study, especially that of history. The special patronage bestowed upon him by the Duc d'Orléans, and the urgent entreaty of highly-placed friends and a number of learned men, made him decide to settle in Paris, where he would have had better opportunities of devoting himself to his favourite pursuit, had not he been prematurely removed by death in January, 1727, at the early age of forty-eight. His published works are:—

1. *Les Impératrices Romaines, ou Histoire de la Vie et des Intrigues Secrètes des Femmes des Douze Premiers Césars*, Paris,

1720, 2 vols. This edition is really the second; the first was published in 1718, and is in *one* volume. The author was encouraged by the success of his work to complete it, and he left the materials for a third edition, which was published in 1728, in three volumes. It was reprinted in 1744 and 1758. The Abbé Lenglet-Dufresnoy, in his Chronological Tables, mentions it as one of the works indispensable for the study of history, and speaks of it in the following terms:—"The book is well written, and deserves its place in history." Notwithstanding this, few bibliographers have mentioned it. It is certainly noticed by M. de Pauliny in the *Bibliothèque Générale des Romans*, but this is incorrect, Serviez' work being purely historical. It only contains facts that are vouched for by recognized authorities; besides, it is written in a style in conformity with the gravity of history. Serviez proposed to continue this work until the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and there is no doubt that it would have been extremely interesting to follow him through the tangled mazes of Byzantine history and to see how he would have infused life into the narrative of the somewhat vapid Byzantine historians and have imparted grace to them by his characterisations of the Byzantine Empresses and Princesses, such, *e.g.* as Anna Comnena, known to us from Walter Scott's *Count Robert of Paris*.

2. *Les Hommes Illustres du Languedoc*, Béziers, 1723.

3. A romance, entitled *Le Caprice ou les Effets de la Fortune* (Geneva, 1724). He also left the MS. of *L'histoire du Brave Crillon*.

According to M. Pauliny, Serviez was also the author of *L'histoire des Femmes Galantes de l'Antiquité*. His grandson, having read the statement, contested M. de Pauliny's assertion, and wrote to know his authority. The latter replied, that it was the *Journal des Savans* for 1726, where, in fact, this is implied. Serviez' grandson, however, persists in denying his grandfather's authorship, for three main reasons:—

1. The fact that *L'histoire des Femmes Galantes de l'Antiquité* did not appear till after the death of the author of the *Roman Empresses*, and was printed in a town with which he had no connection, namely, Rouen.

2. That none of his family knew that he had ever been engaged upon any such work.

3. The unlikelihood of his having undertaken a work of such length (it is in six volumes) before the completion of others upon which he had been long engaged, and which he knew were awaited with impatience.

This account is mainly taken from *Les Siècles Littéraires de la France*, by N. L. M. Desessarts and others. Vol. 6. Paris, 1801.

N.B.—The translation of Serviez' work by the Hon. Byssie Molesworth appears to be the only literary effort of the latter (at least, according to the Catalogue of the British Museum) and no mention is made of him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

PUBLISHER'S HISTORICAL NOTE

THE RULERS OF IMPERIAL ROME

From Julius Cæsar to Constantine the Great

AFTER the assassination of Julius Cæsar (44 B.C.), his power passed into the hands of his nephew Octavius, who became lord of the Roman world, the most important addition to which made by himself was the kingdom of Egypt. The undivided rule of Octavius dates from 30 B.C., when he assumed the title of Augustus, by which he has ever since been known. His reign lasted until A.D. 14, and he was succeeded by Tiberius, his adopted son, in whose reign disappeared the last remnants of the old Roman constitution. Tiberius was succeeded by Caligula, who was a great grandson of Augustus in the female line. After him reigned Claudius I. and then Nero. Tyranny and shameless corruption and licentiousness reached their height under these three emperors. Next in order came Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, who followed each other in rapid succession, each reigning only a few months. The reign of their successor, Vespasian, extended from A.D. 70-79. Vespasian was followed by his son Titus, whose successor was his brother Domitian. On this tyrant's assassination, the humane Nerva was made emperor, and reigned two years. His successor, Trajan, added Dacia (modern Rumania and Transylvania) to the empire, and carried the Roman arms to the Persian gulf, conquering many countries of the East. These conquests were abandoned by the next Emperor, Hadrian, who restored the Euphrates as the eastern boundary of the empire. Following Hadrian came Antoninus Pius, whose heir was

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. The 84 years (A.D. 96-180) of the reigns of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines are considered the most glorious period in Roman history. It is from the year of the accession to the throne of Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 180, that Gibbon dates the commencement of that empire's decline. At that time the empire consisted of Italy, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Rhætia, Noricum and Pannonia, Dalmatia, Mœsia and Dacia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece; Asia, Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine; Egypt, Africa, and the Mediterranean with its islands. The population is estimated at 120,000,000. The emperor Commodus, who became one of the worst of tyrants, was assassinated, and his successor, Pertinax, was murdered by the Prætorians, who sold the empire at auction to Didius Julianus, who after a brief reign of three months was in turn murdered by the prætorian guards as the price of the favour of Septimius Severus. Severus's son Caracalla, and Heliogabalus, first cousin of the latter, rivalled Caligula and Nero in infamy. The conduct of these two, and most of the emperors who subsequently ruled, accelerated the decline of the empire. Alexander Severus, Decius, Aurelian, and Probus are the principal exceptions. Aurelian conquered Zenobia and destroyed Palmyra (A.D. 273), and Probus is regarded as one of the best as well as ablest of the Roman emperors. Under the rule of Diocletian (A.D. 285-305) the empire experienced some revival of its power. But as the emperors had mostly abandoned the old city, and the constitution of the empire was assuming an oriental character, the greatness of Rome of the Cæsars scarcely belongs to that age. Constantine the Great, the first of the Christian emperors, formally transferred the capital to Byzantium, thenceforth called Constantinople, though its founder meant it should be called New Rome. From that time, A.D. 330, should be dated the cessation of the Roman ascendancy, though the remains of the empire continued to influence the world down to the middle of the fifteenth century, when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks.

For the purpose of enabling readers of "The Roman Emperors" to conveniently fix the dates of events described in its pages, the following Chronological Table will be found of advantage:

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

SHOWING THE PERIODS COVERED BY THE RESPECTIVE REIGNS OF
THE ROMAN RULERS FROM CÆSAR TO CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>	
100 B. C.—44		—Cæsar, Caius Julius. Dictator, 49 B. C.—44.
63 B. C.—A. D. 14		—Augustus, Caius Octavius Cæsar. First Roman Emperor, 30 B. C.—A. D. 14.
		Under Augustus, Roman literature reached its highest point. He so adorned the capital, that it was commonly said of him, that he found Rome "brick, and left it marble." The birth of Jesus Christ occurred in his reign.
42 B. C.—A. D. 37		—Tiberius (Tiberius Claudius Nero Cæsar). Emperor, 14 A. D.—37.
12 A. D.—41		—Caligula, Caius Cæsar. Emperor, 37 A. D.—41.
10 B. C.—A. D. 54		—Claudius I. (Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus). Emperor, 41 A. D.—54.
37 A. D.—68		—Nero, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. Emperor, 54 A. D.—68.
3 B. C.—A. D. 69		—Galba, Servius Sulpicius. Emperor, 68 A. D.—69.
32 A. D.—69		—Otho, Marcus Salvius. Emperor, January-April, 69.
15 A. D.—69		—Vitellius, Aulus. Emperor, July-November, 69.
9 A. D.—79		—Vespasian (Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus). Emperor, 70-79.

Born *Died*

40 A. D.—81

—Titus (Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus). Emperor, 79-81.

Called "the delight of mankind." Accomplished the capture of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. His reign was marked by the destruction of Herculaneum, Stabia, and Pompeii by the eruption of Vesuvius. He finished the Colosseum, begun by his father Vespasian, and completed the subjugation of Britain.

51 A. D.—96

—Domitian (Titus Flavius Domitianus Augustus). Emperor, 81-96.

32 A. D.—98

—Nerva, Marcus Cocceius. Emperor, 96-98.

52 A. D.—117

—Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Trajanus). Emperor, 98-117.

Under Trajan the Roman arms were carried further than ever before or after, and rarely suffered defeat. For many generations afterward his reign was looked upon as the most brilliant in imperial annals. His memory was long cherished by the Romans, and 200 years later the senators were in the habit of saluting the emperor with the acclamation: "Be happier than Augustus and better than Trajan."

76 A. D.—138

—Hadrian (Publius Ælius Hadrianus). Emperor, 117-138.

86 A. D.—161

—Antoninus Pius, Titus Aurelius Fulvius. Emperor, 138-161.

121 A. D.—180

—Marcus Aurelius (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus). Emperor, 161-180.

No monarch ever lived more beloved, or died more regretted, than Marcus Aurelius, whose whole life was a practical example of his own philosophic doctrines of mildness and toleration, which he so eloquently advocates in his famous "Meditations." These breathe the

very spirit of the Christian religion which he persecuted, so that it cannot be doubted that he either wholly misunderstood the system of Christianity, and believed its followers, as many in that age did, to be a political sect devoted to the promulgation of pacifism, and averse to all forms of government, or that he was misled by ill-advisers. This pagan philosopher was the last of "The Adoptive Emperors," which included his four predecessors, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius; so called because each was the adopted son of his predecessor. They constitute the greatest and noblest group of Roman Emperors, and, according to the historian Gibbon, the period of their reigns is the happiest in the history of the world.

<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>	
(?) A. D.—169		—Verns, Lucius. Colleague of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, 161-169.
161 A. D.—192		—Commodus, Lucius Ælius Aurelius. Emperor, 180-192.
126 A. D.—193		—Pertinax, Helvius. Emperor, 192-February, 193.
132 A. D.—193		—Didius Julianus (Marcus Didius Commodus Severus Julianus). Emperor, March-June, 193.
146 A. D.—211		—Severus, Lucius Septimius. Emperor, 193-211.
188 A. D.—217		—Caracalla, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Emperor, 211-217.
164 A. D.—218		—Macrinus, Marcus Ophellius. Emperor, 217-218.
205 A. D.—222		—Heliogabalus, Varius Avitus Bassianus. Emperor, 218-222.
205 A. D.—235		—Alexander Severus, Marcus Aurelius. Emperor, 222-235.
(?) A. D.—238		—Maximinus, Caius Julius Verus. Emperor, 235-238.

<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>	
158 A. D.—238		—Gordianus I. ("The Elder"), Marcus Antoninus. Emperor, six weeks (238).
(?) A. D.—238		—Pupienus Maximus, M. Clodius. Emperor, 3 months (238).
224 A. D.—244		—Gordianus III., Marcus Antoninus Pius. Emperor, 238-244.
204 A. D.—249		—Philip (Marcus Julius Philippus), "The Arabian." Emperor, 244-249.
199 A. D.—251		—Decius, Caius Messius Quintus Trajanus. Emperor, 249-251.
(?) A. D.—253		—Gallus, Caius Vibius Trebonianus. Emperor, 251-253.
(?) A. D.—269		—Valerianus, Publius Aurelius Licinius. Emperor, 254-260.
235 A. D.—268		—Gallienus, Publius Licinius Egnatius. Emperor, 260-268.
214 A. D.—270		—Claudius II. (Marcus Aurelius Claudius). Emperor, 268-270.
212 A. D.—275		—Aurelian, Lucius Domitius. Emperor, 270-275.
200 A. D.—276		—Tacitus, Marcus Claudius. Emperor, 275-276.
		After the assassination of the emperor Aurelian in March, 275, there was for six months a period of what Gibbon calls a "tranquil anarchy," during which the army and the senate mutually solicited each other to select a successor to the throne. Tacitus was unanimously elected emperor by the latter body September, 275, but died within little more than half a year from the commencement of his reign.
232 A. D.—282		—Probus, Marcus Aurelius. Emperor, 276-282.
222 A. D.—283		—Carus, Marcus Aurelius. Emperor, 282-283.
(?) A. D.—285		—Carinus, Marcus Aurelius. Emperor, 283-285.
245 A. D.—313		—Diocletian, Valerius. Emperor, 285-305.

According to Gibbon, Diocletian, like Augustus the adopted son of Cæsar and the first Roman emperor, may be considered as the

founder of a new empire. Diocletian inaugurated the period of the "Partnership Emperors," by associating with him in the labours of government three colleagues—Maximian (Hercules), Galerius, and Constantius. These four princes distributed among themselves the wide extent of the Roman empire. Each was sovereign within his jurisdiction; but their united authority extended over the whole monarchy, and each of them was prepared to assist his colleagues with his counsels or presence.

<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>	
(?) A. D.—311		—Galerius (Galerius Valerius Maximinus). Emperor of the East, 305-311.
(?) A. D.—310		—Hercules: Maximian, Marcus Aurelius Valerius, surnamed Herculus. Emperor with Diocletian, 286-305 and 306-308.
(?) A. D.—313		—Maximinus, or Maximin, Galerius Valerius. Emperor, 308-313.
(?) A. D.—324		—Licinius (Caius Flavius Valerius Licinianus). Emperor, 313-323.
274 A. D.—337		—Constantine I. (Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus), surnamed "The Great." Emperor, 323-337.

THE
ROMAN EMPRESSES

THE ROMAN EMPRESSES

CALPURNIA

WIFE OF JULIUS CÆSAR,



JULIUS CÆSAR had four wives. The first was Cossutia, daughter of a Roman knight, and extremely rich. He was very young when he married her, and as his inclinations were not much consulted in this match, he put her away before he had cohabited with her, in order to espouse Cornelia, daughter of Cinna, who was distinguished by having been four times consul. This alliance drew upon him the jealousy of Sulla, whose power was very formidable at Rome, where everything was governed according to his will and pleasure.

This dictator, who was Cinna's mortal enemy, used all his endeavours to induce Cæsar to put away Cornelia, but in vain; Cæsar was not a man capable of yielding easily to another, and, having been brought up by his aunt Julia (Marius's wife), was, from his infancy, taught that invincible aversion that all Marius's relations had to Sulla, for they had opposed themselves as a barrier against the tyrannical power of this dictator. On the other hand, Cæsar loved Cornelia; but if he could have prevailed upon himself to put her away, especially to please Sulla,

his father-in-law Cinna was powerful enough to make him repent it.

Sulla was then possessed of a power little less than absolute, and, imagining that everything ought to give way to him, was extremely exasperated at the resistance which he met with from Cæsar; and, to punish him, stripped him of the priesthood, seized everything belonging to him and his wife, deprived him of all right of succession, and would probably have carried his resentment further, if he had not been taken up with getting rid of some other enemies whom he thought more considerable, and if the vestal virgins,¹ and many other persons of importance, had not interested themselves for Cæsar.

¹ Numa Pompilius, second King of Rome, caused a temple to be built in honour of the goddess Vesta, in which was preserved the fire called sacred and eternal, because it was never suffered to go out; and he instituted religious women (a sort of nuns) whose business it was to take care of it, and who were named vestals from the goddess Vesta, to whom they were dedicated. The oldest of these virgins was styled the great vestal, and she had a supreme authority over the rest. They vowed to preserve their virginity for thirty years, after which they were permitted to quit that state, and to marry, or pass the remainder of their lives as they thought proper; but few made use of this liberty, for it was observed that, as many of them as had quitted their profession to marry or live in the world, were afflicted in the latter end of their lives with perpetual sickness, disorders, and a thousand misfortunes, which were looked upon as a just punishment for their desertion. This had possessed people's minds with superstition and fear, so that there were scarce any of the vestals that had courage enough to quit their condition. As for those who broke their vows before the expiration of the thirty years, and were guilty of any breach of chastity, they were condemned to death in the following manner:—They were buried alive in a deep dungeon, which was dug on purpose in a place called the accursed field. They were let down with their faces covered, as being unworthy to see the light, and nothing allowed them but a lighted lamp, a little bread and water, some milk, and some oil. And the day whereon they were thus interred, all the town was in mourning, the shops shut up, and nothing to be seen on every side but the deepest melancholy. Her sacrilegious accomplice had also his share in the punishment as he had in the crime, for he was whipped to death. As the most essential part of the vestals' duty consisted in their maintaining the sacred fire day and night, they were

Sulla, who was extremely penetrating and well acquainted with the enterprising genius of that ambitious Roman, foresaw the misfortunes that he would one day bring upon the Republic; he, therefore, not only opposed

continually upon the watch; but if any of them were so negligent as to let it go out (which was reckoned the forerunner of some dreadful calamity) the offender was chastised very rigorously, for she was scourged quite naked by the chief priest in a dark place behind a curtain. This severity was the reason that nobody cared to make their daughters vestals; on the contrary, everyone sought pretences to avoid it, whence it happened that they were afterwards obliged to take them by force. The Emperors sometimes recompensed the generosity of those who offered their daughters with a good grace. And we read that Tiberius, after the death of Occia, the chief vestal, being under some difficulties about filling up her place, and Fonteius Agrippa having presented his daughter (who, nevertheless, was not received), rewarded the good intention of that Senator, by making the young lady a present of a sum amounting to fifty thousand livres. It is to be observed, that it was not every girl that could be admitted into this order, for she was not to be less than six years old, nor more than ten; she was to have no defect in her speech or limbs, nor subject to any disorder. Her parents were to have been exempt from a state of servitude, and such as had never followed any low occupation. They even gave the preference to the daughters of such women as had been but once married. When none offered themselves voluntarily, the great Pontiff singled out twenty girls, who drew lots, and he selected her on whom the lot fell. She was carried immediately to the temple of Vesta, shaved, and clad in the proper habit, for it would have been a very immodest and scandalous thing if one of these virgins had made use of any dress or ornaments that were not suitable to the sanctity of her profession; and Titus Livius tells us, that the vestal Minucia was extremely blamed for having dressed in a manner not conformable to her condition. The accusation was not without grounds, as the event proved; for soon after, Minucia was condemned to undergo the punishment appointed for those who lost their virginity. The vestals had a right to several privileges, and had revenues assigned them by the public. When they walked abroad, they were preceded by lictors, like the magistrates; and if they met any criminal going to execution, he was pardoned, provided the vestal made oath that her meeting him was mere chance, and that there was no design in it. Their persons were sacred; and at public assemblies they were entitled to the chief places. In short, the Romans had the greatest respect for them. They reconciled the nobles when they had any quarrel among them, and nobody durst refuse them anything they asked, so much were they esteemed. This was the reason that Cæsar's friends, in order to obtain his pardon from Sulla, had recourse to the vestals. Their number was limited to six by King Servius, but afterwards they were increased to twenty.

We must not forget to take notice that, if the holy fire happened to go out, it was not to be rekindled but by lightning or the rays of the sun.

Cæsar's friends by all the reasons he was master of, but disguising his private resentment under the mask of the public interest, endeavoured to persuade them that they ought to be so far from interceding for Cæsar, that they should contribute all they could to his destruction, since, if he were suffered to live, he would, some time or other, ruin the party of the nobility, which they themselves had defended with so much zeal and courage. Fortune, however, rescued Cæsar from the hatred of Sulla. The Dictator, being at last overcome by the importunity of those whom he could not well refuse, was obliged to pardon him; but, to show them how unwillingly he complied with their request, "I grant you," says he, "what you ask, but remember that more than one Marius is concealed in the person of Cæsar."

Cæsar was quæstor ¹ when he lost his wife Cornelia; and, as he loved her beyond measure, he was excessively afflicted at her death. He gave public tokens of his grief in the pompous eulogy which he pronounced upon that

¹ The office of quæstor was one of the most ancient posts in Rome, and was reckoned an introduction into affairs of the greatest importance. Nobody could enjoy it who was not twenty-seven years of age. At the beginning there were but two of them, who had the charge of the public treasure and ensigns of war; but Italy having been all made tributary, and the revenues of the Republic being considerably increased, six more were added, and Sulla augmented them to twenty; but Cæsar made them still more numerous. Of all these quæstors no more than two resided at Rome, who kept registers of all the receipts and payments of the Republic, and the rest were sent into the provinces to keep an account of the revenues ordinary, extraordinary, and casual; as, for example, the spoils taken in war, or at the surrender of towns, the sale of prisoners, and other like occasions. The employment of quæstor became more honourable under the Emperors, for when the Prince could not, or would not, go to the Senate, he sent thither his orders by the quæstors. They took cognisance of all causes relating to the public debts, a power which Nero deprived them of, to give it to the intendant or commissary of the city. The Emperor Claudius added several new honours to this employ; but on the other hand he disgraced it by rendering it venal, by Dolabella's advice.

occasion from the Tribunal of Harangues;¹ and, certainly, he had all the reason in the world to lament his loss, for Pompeia, whom he married soon after, caused him a great deal of vexation.

She was daughter of Pompeius Rufus, and niece to Sulla. This lady was young, handsome, lively, and of so amorous a disposition, that she did not value herself upon an over-strict fidelity to her husband, whom she married, perhaps, much more through policy² than inclination. She carried her complaisance very far for Publius Clodius.³ This person was of an illustrious family, whose antiquity surpassed that of Rome itself. He⁴ was then in the flower of his age, very handsome in his person, and possessed of vast riches, which he did not always make the best use of. He had a great deal of very agreeable wit, and a cheerful humour, always dis-

¹ Or, "orators' tribunals." In the middle of the square called Forum Romanum was a temple dedicated to Fortune, adorned with the iron and copper belonging to the ships of Antium which were taken by the Romans. Of the beaks of those ships was made a sort of tribunal or pulpit raised very high, upon which the magistrates mounted when they were disposed to harangue the people. Round this tribunal were ranged the statues of many great men of the Republic. It was also from this place that funeral orations were pronounced; and it was there that Cicero so frequently thundered out his eloquence. It was afterwards disgraced, by fixing upon it the heads of the greatest men of the Republic. Marius caused to be put there the head of Mark Antony the orator (who formerly had adorned it with triumphal spoils). He also placed young Marius's head there; and Mark Antony the triumvir exposed in that place the head and right hand of Cicero.

² Sueton. vit. Jul. Cæs.

³ Publius Clodius was descended from the noble house of the Clodians, who always maintained the interests of the Senate and patricians against the people; and Clodius, of whom we are now speaking, was the first of his name that took part with the people against the Senate. He caused himself to be adopted by a plebeian, that he might be capable of being chosen Tribune of the people; and we shall see what use he made of the authority which that employment furnished him with. Clodius's wife was named Fulvia, by whom he had his daughter Clodia, who was married to Augustus, and divorced soon after.

⁴ Plutar. vit. Cæs. vit. Cicer.

posed to mirth and pleasure; but he was rash in his enterprises, irregular in his desires, furious in his hatred, impudent in his manners, neither respecting laws nor magistrates; showing in his countenance that air of assurance which independence is apt to give; inclined to the most infamous actions, witness his abominations with his own sisters; in short, ready to hazard everything to gratify those appetites which are generally the unfortunate attendants of giddy youth, and in which he was encouraged by the bad example of many of the most illustrious citizens of Rome, now grown weary of being virtuous.

Clodius, being the person I have described him, insinuated himself into the good graces of Cæsar's wife, and presently discovered that he was not indifferent to her. Aurelia, Cæsar's mother,¹ a lady of great penetration, and of the strictest virtue, was not the last that perceived it. She therefore narrowly watched the conduct of her daughter-in-law, whose behaviour seemed very suspicious: Aurelia was an Argus not easily to be lulled asleep.

Clodius put in practice all his cunning and stratagems to see Cæsar's wife, but to no purpose; for Pompeia could not move a step without being guarded by her mother-in-law. Wherever she went, she was still accompanied by this severe spy, who saw into her very thoughts, and watched her so closely, that it was impossible for her to steal one favourable glance.

Aurelia was, however, imposed upon at last by the two lovers, in spite of all her vigilance. Love took a pleasure in deceiving her, by inspiring Clodius with a secret way

¹Plutar. vit. Cæs. and in Regum Apophthegm.

of seeing his mistress. Every year a solemn sacrifice was performed at Rome in honour of the Good Goddess¹ in one of the consuls' houses, and, in their absence, in one of the prætors.² Amongst other very odd ceremonies

¹The Good Goddess had many names, but Fauna was the true one. She was the wife of one Faunus, and was so prudent, modest, and chaste, that it is reported no man but her husband so much as knew her name, and that none else had ever seen her face. A misfortune that happened to this rare woman occasioned her being made a goddess. Her husband being one day absent, she found, by chance, a bottle of wine, which she tasted, and finding it good, made so free of it as to be drunk, being quite ignorant of its nature, and never having met with it before. Faunus happened to come in just then, and finding her in this condition, in the heat of his passion seized some twigs of myrtle, of which he made a whip, and gave her so many strokes that she died of it. This cruel correction was followed by a bitter repentance; he was ashamed of his violence, and the merit of his wife, whom he had treated with so much injustice and inhumanity, greatly added to his grief. The evil being however past remedy, and not having it in his power to restore her to life, he was resolved to make her a goddess by procuring her immortality.

²After the Kings of Rome were banished, two consuls were created, who had the administration of affairs. But when it happened that the consuls were obliged to quit the town to command the armies, they created a prætor to administer justice in Rome, and he was to supply the place of the consuls, for when they were absent, his power was very considerable; he had then authority to assemble the Senate, in which he presided; to abolish some laws, and to make new ones. It was also at his house that the sacrifice to the Good Goddess was celebrated. In short, all the power of the consuls was then vested in him. At first the prætor was chosen out of the order of patricians, but afterwards the plebeians were also admitted to that office. And because one prætor was not sufficient for the town, on account of the great number of strangers who flocked thither upon business, they created another, whose duty it was to dispatch the affairs of these strangers, called Prætor Peregrinus. Afterwards they were increased to six; two of whom were to decide the differences and disputes of private persons, and the others took cognisance of such crimes as were of a public nature. At last all the provinces being become tributary, and fallen under the yoke and government of the Romans, other prætors were ordained, and sent into the provinces. They had a right to wear the robe called Prætexta, and to be preceded by lictors, and even to command the troops that were in their respective provinces. The town prætor lodged in the palace that formerly belonged to the Kings. His tribunal was called the Prætorium, and from thence came the name of the guards called the Prætorian Cohorta, because they were appointed to attend the prætor, and waited upon him in the hall of justice during his stay there. The prætors were not to be absent from Rome above ten days. When the prætor condemned any person to death, he quitted his purple robe and appeared in deep mourning.

essentially necessary upon this occasion, that of never celebrating them but by night was most scrupulously observed, and no man whatsoever was to be admitted, not even the consul or prætor at whose house they were solemnized. The wife or mother of the consul or prætor presided, and was assisted by the vestal virgins. Nothing could gain admittance that had the least appearance of the male sex. The ladies took so much care to be exempt from all suspicion of gallantry,¹ that they were not permitted to have so much as a sprig of myrtle in their nose-gays, because that shrub was dedicated to Venus.

In spite of the danger the transgression of these laws was attended with, and against which nobody till then had ever dared to offend, Clodius, hurried on by the impetuosity of his headstrong, unthinking youth, was incapable of making reflections; and, therefore, without the least scruple, he resolved to profane these solemnities, and lay hold on that opportunity of seeing Cæsar's wife. The sacrifice was to be celebrated that year at her house, and that night was intended to be for her a night of triumph; she was to appear in the assembly with all her graces and charms. Much would have been wanting to her satisfaction, if her lover was not to have seen her in her beauty, and Clodius could never have survived the grief of such a disappointment.

They agreed, then, to see each other in the very place of the sacrifice, without troubling themselves about the danger to which they were exposed, nor the difficulties that lay in their way. The enterprise was hazardous, but love is more than ever desirous to triumph upon such occasions; so the design was thus concerted. It was

¹Plutar. Quest. Rer. Rom.

determined that Clodius should be dressed in woman's clothes, that he should enter Cæsar's house in the crowd, and that Abra, one of Pompeia's women who was in the secret, should introduce the disguised lover into her chamber, where Pompeia was to meet him. This girl was mistress of all the address that was necessary to conduct an intrigue, and Clodius had made her entirely his friend. He knew that in affairs of gallantry, it was impossible not to have some confidant, and a chamber-maid has a natural right to a trust of that nature.

These measures being taken, and the hour of sacrifice come, Clodius, without fear or foresight, gives himself up to his fortune; takes a woman's habit, and being young, his countenance did not betray him; he joins those who were going into Cæsar's house, and, being favoured by the darkness of the night and his disguise, goes in with them to assist at the sacrifice. Abra took care to be punctually at the door to receive him, and, having very cunningly conducted him into her chamber, ran to give Pompeia notice that her lover waited for her.

Time, which seems very tedious upon these occasions, appeared much so to Clodius, and the more so, since Abra (by some of those unlucky accidents which often happen in adventures of this kind) was employed about other matters (probably by order of Aurelia), and could not, for a long time, carry an answer to the metamorphosed lover, who was all this while very uneasy, and, being naturally of a restless temper, was extremely fretted by these delays, which he accounted for by a thousand reasons, without hitting upon the true one; and, his uneasiness increasing every moment, he foolishly quitted the chamber, and wandered about the house. This

impatience quite spoiled all the measures he had settled with Pompeia; for, not knowing what to do, and affecting to hide his face by avoiding the light and the company, he gave room for suspicion. A servant maid of the house, taking him for a woman, asked him who he was and what he looked for? This abrupt question disconcerted him; he seemed in confusion, but at last answered that he wanted Abra. The concern he showed, together with the sound of his voice, which did not agree with his dress, discovered the mystery; the maid found out the cheat, and began to cry out as loud as she could, that there was in the house a man in woman's clothes.

This uproar ruined the two lovers and their schemes, and struck all the assembly with astonishment. The lady rambled about the house without knowing whither, and had trouble enough to find Clodius, whom she hid again in the same chamber, after rating him severely for his imprudence. This unfortunate accident, which was enough to put to a nonplus the greatest presence of mind and quickest invention, embarrassed her beyond description. In the meantime, the sacrifice and all the ceremonies are interrupted, Aurelia commands all the doors to be shut and lighted torches to be brought, and, after a diligent search in every corner, finds Clodius in the confidant's chamber, and turns him out.

This scandalous affair happening among a company of women it cannot be supposed it could remain a secret. The ladies longed to be at home to communicate it to their husbands, and, consequently, it was all over the town the next morning. Pompeia and Clodius became the subjects of all the conversation; and nothing was spoken of but this rash undertaking. Cæsar, being

thoroughly persuaded that Clodius did not proceed in this affair unknown to Pompeia, put her away.

One of the tribunes,¹ in the meantime, takes cognisance of this sacrilegious affair, and Clodius is cited to his trial; but, finding that the best thing he could do was to deny the whole charge, he protested that he was falsely accused, and that he was absent from Rome the night of this sacrifice, which he offered to prove. The examination was not favourable to him. A great many witnesses deposed against him, and, among the rest, Cicero declared that Clodius had consulted him at Rome that very day.² This evidence was of so much weight as to leave no room for doubt, and amounted to a demonstration, in a place where the honesty and uprightness of Cicero were held in the highest veneration.³

¹ The people being quite wearied out with the tyranny of usurers and the oppressions they suffered under the great men of Rome, retired into one quarter of the town and mutinied. Agrippa, a most prudent and much esteemed senator, was deputed to quell this sedition, and knew so well how to manage them, that he was so lucky as to succeed upon certain conditions, the principal of which was, that the people should have their own magistrates, that they should be chosen from their own community, and that their persons should be safe and inviolable. They were called Tribunes of the People. At first only two were created, but afterwards they were increased to twenty, and were designed, at the beginning, only to defend the people against the power of the nobility, but in time became so formidable as to counterbalance the authority of the consuls; for the tribunes had a right to convoke the people as often as they thought proper, without interruption from any person whatsoever. They had power to establish laws which should bind the three orders, and took under their protection all such as had recourse to them, and by those means sheltered them against the proceedings of all other magistrates, excepting the dictator. They had also a right to oppose the decrees of the Senate, which they examined into. They could even imprison the consuls; for as their persons were in a manner sacred, nobody had courage enough to oppose them. Sulla indeed lessened their power considerably, and the Emperors afterwards abolished entirely this dignity, as being opposite to the tyranny they assumed.

² Valer. Max. lib. 8. c. 5.

³ It is well known that Cicero was one of the greatest men that ever Rome produced. His name is derived from the Latin word *Cicer* or *vetch*, because the first man that gave some reputation to the family had

Clodius little expected that Cicero, upon whom he had conferred great obligations, would have appeared against him; he had sheltered and protected Cicero from Catiline's resentment, who, many a time, would have attempted to kill him, if Clodius had not perpetually stood

on his nose a wart that resembled a pea. Cicero, however, would never change his name; and when his friends attempted to persuade him to it, he answered, that he would make his name so famous that few should surpass it. His merit raised him to the highest dignities of the Republic, of whose liberties he was always a most generous and zealous defender. He discovered Catiline's conspiracy, and caused the authors and accomplices to be punished as they deserved, which procured him the love and esteem of all the Romans. Cicero was the greatest orator that ever was born; and it may be affirmed, that his conclusions were a sort of law to the Senate. He had frequent quarrels with Clodius and Mark Antony. It is reported that he was one of those who conspired against Julius Cæsar, and that Brutus, after that prince had been assassinated in the Senate House, looking about for Cicero, showed him his sword yet smoking with the blood of Cæsar, and cried out to him, that Rome had at last recovered its liberty. Cicero was reproached with being of a very timid and cowardly disposition. He had also a large share of vanity, and never spoke a quarter of an hour without running into praises of himself, and putting the Senate in mind of the public services he had done. He married Terentia, by whom he had a daughter, who was married to Piso, and afterwards to Lentulus; also another who survived him, and a son called Marcus Cicero. Towards the latter end of his life he put away Terentia, because he imagined she despised him, and that during his absence she had dissipated his substance and contracted debts. But when he married a young girl soon after, whom he was much in love with, people were apt to attribute that divorce to other reasons. He also put away his second wife, after the death of his daughter, who died in child-bed, because he fancied she rejoiced at his loss, which was very great, for he loved her with the utmost tenderness. Terentia lived one hundred and seventeen years. It is said that Cicero's mother at his birth felt no pain. He was called Marcus Tullius Cicero. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, a tomb was discovered in the high-road near Terracina, which was called by the Romans *Via Appia*, and in it was found the body of a young girl swimming in a certain unknown liquor. The corpse had fair hair turned up with a gold buckle, and as fresh as if alive. At the feet of the body was a lamp burning, which went out as soon as the air came to it. By the inscriptions it appeared that it had been buried in that place fifteen hundred years, and it was supposed to be the body of Tullia, Cicero's daughter. It was carried to Rome, and exposed in the Capitol, where great crowds of people came to view it; but as the credulous multitude would needs have it to be the body of a saint, because it was not corrupted, the Pope ordered it to be thrown by night into the Tiber.

between him and danger, and he was not a man to see his friend insulted. So considerable a piece of service added to the intimate friendship that had always subsisted between them was the reason that Clodius could never forgive this deposition of Cicero, which he thought the highest ingratitude, and felt ever after an implacable hatred of him.¹

It is certain that Cicero was more to be pitied than blamed. He did not give his evidence willingly, nor appear against Clodius till he was compelled to it by an

¹ Clodius being full of resentment against Cicero, got himself chosen tribune of the people, on purpose to be revenged. In fact, he banished him from the city, set his country house on fire as well as that which he had at Rome, caused all his goods to be sold by auction, and vexed him by all possible means. Cicero retired to Dyrrachium, whose inhabitants received him with the utmost respect, and he stayed there till Milo, who was chosen tribune, recalled him, and openly espoused his interests, by declaring himself for Cicero against Clodius; for Milo, who was a man of spirit and great quality, despised a person that could with so much spite and cruelty persecute the most zealous and faithful citizen of Rome. This occasioned a falling out between Clodius and Milo, which came to the greatest degree of hatred, and from that time they sought for nothing but opportunities of plaguing each other. Clodius was the first that declared war; for perceiving that Milo strove for the consulship, he did all he could to oppose him, and to that purpose assisted Scipio and Hypsæus, the other competitors. The two parties were extremely irritated, and almost came to blows. During this dispute, Clodius, returning from Aricia, met Milo on the Appian Way as he was going to Lanuvium. Their servants began the fray, and the masters at last engaged with great fury, till Clodius was killed. The accident put all the town in an uproar; and the Senate, to prevent greater disorders, created Pompey consul, and ordered him to enquire into the murder. Pompey named commissaries out of every order of the town; and Milo recommended his cause to Cicero, whom he prayed to defend him. The orator, who was under great obligations to Milo, exerted the whole force of his eloquence, and composed that admirable speech (*Orat. pro Milone*) which anybody that pleases may see; but his manner of uttering it was not of a piece with the composition; for Pompey having posted some soldiers about the place to prevent disorders, Cicero was intimidated so much, that in pleading, he did not pronounce half the excellent things he had prepared, so that Milo was condemned to a severe banishment to Marseilles. It is reported, that reading one day the oration of Cicero which was composed for that occasion, he said, that if Cicero had spoken it as it was written, Milo would not then be employed in catching oysters at Marseilles.

authority more to be feared than the tribune. Terentia, his wife, a most obstinate and furious woman, obliged him to act thus. She was provoked against Clodius, because his sister Claudia had attempted to steal from her her husband's affections. This lady, being very beautiful, was much taken with the merit of Cicero (who had exalted himself to the consulship through all the degrees of honour, and was in the highest esteem at Rome), and would have been very well pleased to have married him. As this could not be brought about but by Cicero divorcing his wife, Claudia secretly employed one named Tullus in the affair, an intimate friend of Cicero, who visited him every day, and who was very familiar with Clodius, to whose house he had also free access.

As soon as Terentia had discovered this secret negotiation, she became furiously jealous, which made her the scourge of her family. As she was not a woman to swallow her grief silently, she made an uproar that would have wearied out the patience of a Stoic. Never were Cicero's virtue and philosophy put to so severe a trial; his wife made the house ring again with her continual brawling, and, as Claudia was out of her reach, she discharged her rage upon everybody about her. She desired nothing so much as an opportunity of showing her hatred, and greedily seized that which this affair of Clodius furnished her with; so, making use of the absolute authority she had assumed over her husband, she forced him to depose against the brother of her rival. No doubt but it was committing a great violence upon him, who was very sensible of the favours he had received from Clodius, but obey he must, and esteemed himself happy enough to make peace in his family upon those terms.

Cicero, however, was not the only person that accused Clodius; for people of all sorts witnessed against him, and charged him with numerous crimes; even Lucullus, his brother-in-law, produced a servant-maid, who deposed that Clodius, by a horrible incest, had rendered his sister unfaithful to her husband.¹

It is certain that nobody thought him innocent, and he never would have been acquitted, if the severity of the laws had been put in force; but his high birth and great connections, which took in all the nobility of Rome, together with the protection of the people, who unanimously declared for him, outweighed his crime.

Thus did favour take the place of justice, and he escaped the punishment he deserved, how glaring soever his fault was.

It is true that the Senate, to save appearances, had recourse to expedients.² The majority of the judges gave their opinion in a confused sort of manner; and the sentence was couched in such unintelligible terms, that they were forced to explain it by another; which affected obscurity brought him off.

The most remarkable circumstance in this affair was, that whilst Cæsar's friends were extremely zealous for his honour, he himself was quite indifferent. He was too well acquainted with his wife's gallantries to imagine that this was the first instance of her transgression. He

¹ Clodius had three sisters whom he brutally abused; the eldest, called Terentia, was married to Marcius Rex, and Claudia, the second, to Metellus Celer. She was called in derision *Quadrantaria*; for, not being reckoned very cruel, she had been played a scurvy trick by her lover, who instead of money which he had promised her, sent her a purse full of Quadrantes, a sort of small coin of base metal. The youngest was wife to Lucullus.

² Plutar. *Vita Cæsar. Vita Cicer.*

had taken some pains to examine into the matter, and probably found out more than he had a mind to know. He was, however, cited to be heard, but did not think proper to complain much. So unseasonable a tranquillity surprised everybody. He was interrogated as to his wife's adultery, but answered that he knew nothing of it. He had indeed put her away, which was a tacit acknowledgment of her guilt; but, being asked why he did so, answered that Cæsar's wife ought to be exempt, not only from crime, but from suspicion.

He met with one of that character in Calpurnia, Piso's daughter.¹ As Cæsar was already grown very powerful, he destined his new father-in-law to succeed him in the consulship, that sublime ² dignity which was then so much sought after.³

Cato, that severe censor of all those that had more

¹ See note on p. 27.

² After the Romans had shaken off Tarquin's yoke, they created other magistrates, to whose hands the government of the Republic was intrusted. They were called consuls, from the Latin word *consulere*, which signifies to take care of anything, to the end that their name might continually put them in mind of their duty. There were but two of them: they continued a year in their employ, and were absolute in their authority as long as it lasted. They could not obtain it till they were forty-three years of age. The consuls were chiefs of the council. They had a sovereign command in the town, the armies, and the provinces. They were also at first called *prætors*, but afterwards another officer was created and distinguished by that name, the consuls being known by no other title than that of consul. They were always chosen in the field of Mars, and taken from among the patricians, till the Licinian law, which ordained that one of them should be a plebeian. The consuls were preceded by twelve lictors, who carried bundles of rods with hatchets tied up in them, to scourge or behead upon the spot, if necessary. The chief of them was called the great consul, and the other was his partner in the consulship. Nobody was superior to them, for their power was absolute, which the law of the Twelve Tables sufficiently shows, viz. "*Regio imperio duo sunt, ille præeundo, judicando, consulendo, Prætores, judices, Consules appellantur; militiæ summum jus habento; nemini parento; ollis salus Populi Romani suprema lex esto.*"

³ Sueton. vit. Jul. Cæs.

than ordinary ambition, could not see with patience this sort of traffic, but openly declaimed against such an encroachment on the public liberty, and said it was a shame that the command of the armies, the government of provinces, and the principal dignities of the Republic should be prostituted at that rate, and depend upon marriages. This, however, was the last fault of that nature that Cæsar was guilty of; for he found, in Calpurnia, every quality that could deserve his esteem.

She was of an illustrious family, descended from Numa Pompilius, second King of Rome. Her beauty was accompanied with a consummate prudence, penetrating wit, a degree of eloquence that did not yield to that of the greatest orators, and a true Roman generosity; she was, in short, such a woman as Cæsar's wife ought to be, who, having formed the vastest and most audacious project that the mind of man was capable of, aspired to no less than the conquest of the world.

In all degrees and vicissitudes of fortune, she preserved an evenness of temper that nothing could alter; for, however high a condition Cæsar had exalted himself to by his victories and triumphs, she never became the more haughty or proud; every day of her life was the same.

It certainly was a rare thing to meet with so much modesty in such a glorious station; and was the more commendable in Calpurnia, because everything seemed to flatter her ambition and vanity. Her fortune could not but be extraordinary, since it was the same with Cæsar's, who, from a plain Roman Senator, was, by his superior genius and prodigious courage, become master of the Romans. His arms, which so many conquests had

rendered terrible to all the world, were also formidable to Rome; and this Republic, so jealous of her liberty; this Republic, who had given laws to so many nations, and brought so many people under the yoke, was obliged to suffer that of one of her own citizens. The Senate, that most venerable body, master of all the kings of the earth, became a slave to Cæsar. One might see all those great men of which it was composed striving to outdo each other in respect and submission, and decreeing to the tyrant of their liberties the most pompous and most sacred honours.

They styled him Father of his Country, made him perpetual Dictator,¹ that sovereign dignity which Sulla, with all his power and authority, never dared to keep possession of, because it aroused odium the moment any person attempted to do so.

Cæsar had a distinguished place in the Senate. They caused a temple to be erected to his honour before his palace; and raised a superb cupola on the roof, putting

¹The dictatorship was an extraordinary office, which the Romans never had recourse to, but upon the most pressing occasions, and when the Republic was threatened with some imminent danger. The dictator was chosen by the consuls; and the election was never made but by night. He had an absolute power of life and death over the citizens; his sentence was without appeal, except one example to the contrary, which Titus Livius takes notice of, where we read, that M. Fabius appealed from the judgment of the dictator Papirius, to the tribunes of the people. "*Tribunos Plebis appello et provoco ad Populum.*" The dictator was styled the master of the people, *Magister Populi*. All the other magistrates were subordinate to him; his commands were respected as so many oracles, and the consuls themselves were entirely submissive to them. He was preceded by twenty-four lictors, and was bound by no law. He named whom he pleased for general of the horse (*Magister Equitum*), who was an officer next to himself in command, and who never fought but on foot. The dictator's commission was in force but six months, as they would not give so exorbitant a power for a longer time, for fear the person in whom it was vested should thereby make himself the tyrant of the Republic.

it, by that, on a level with the temple of the gods.¹ They also gave his name to one of the months² of the year,³ placed his statue among those of the gods, and carried their impious and sacrilegious flattery so far as to grant him immortality, even during his life.⁴

Among these excessive honours, Calpurnia was not forgotten, and the Senate, so liberal towards Cæsar, did not show themselves niggardly with regard to her. For, besides those conferred upon her husband, and which, of course, reflected back upon her, they invented particu-

¹ No person was permitted to erect a dome on his house, which was an honour peculiar to the sacred temples.

² Romulus, first King of Rome, made the year consist of ten months, and began it by the month of March, so called after the god Mars, whose son he pretended to be. Numa Pompilius added two more, but the year still began by the month of March. July being the fifth month, they called it Quintilis, till, in order to do honour to Cæsar, they changed its name to Julius, as they afterwards did the sixth to Augustus, in honour of that Emperor.

³ Suet. Plutar. vita Jul. Cæs. Florus. lib 4. c. 2.

⁴ The apotheosis, or conferring divinity, was a ceremony observed among the Romans, when they had a mind to place an Emperor, Empress, hero, or any other illustrious person in the ranks of the gods. The principal things to be observed in this consecration were these: They made an image of wax, resembling the person to whom they were about to grant the divinity; this was placed upon a bed of parade, and the senators and other persons of distinction, of both sexes, went to pay their respects to it for seven days. The image was afterwards carried with great pomp into the Roman Forum, where the praises of the deceased were sung, and from thence to the field of Mars without the town, where the eulogy was pronounced. The pontiffs or priests, in the meantime, placed the image on the second step of the funeral pile, which was five degrees or stories high, and shaped like a pyramid, the inside of which was filled with small dry wood, and a great quantity of perfumes. At last the Emperor, assisted by the consuls and other magistrates, set fire to it, and as soon as it was kindled, they let fly from it an eagle, if the person was a man; and if a woman, a peacock. The bird, frightened by the flames, flew off, and the people imagined that it carried away with it the soul of the deceased among the gods. After the ceremony they caused a temple to be built in honour of the new divinity. At first this extraordinary honour was not easily granted; it was the reward of great exploits and superior merit, and never conferred till after the death of the person; but afterwards flattery came to such a pitch, that it was given to living people.

lar honours for her. No sort of praises or pompous titles were omitted; for, after the Senate had, by a most servile complaisance, granted divinity to Cæsar, what might not his wife aspire to?

But, notwithstanding all this, which, one would think, was enough to corrupt the sentiments of any person, it made no impression on Calpurnia. Never was the least symptom of pride seen in her, nor did her elevation get the better of her modesty. No difference was to be seen between Calpurnia, wife of Cæsar, the plain senator, and of Cæsar, master of the world. Her manners were always the same; that is, they were always courteous and affable. Her goodness and sweetness of temper, in the most elevated station, were as much admired, as was afterwards that firmness of soul which she showed at the unfortunate death of her husband.

However moderate Cæsar's government was¹ (who piqued himself upon his clemency and generosity), it yet became insupportable to a people accustomed to liberty, who did not know what it was to be slaves, having never obeyed any laws but those which they themselves had made, and therefore looked upon his prodigious power and elevation to be, not so much the reward of his merit, as a mark of their weakness and indolence. The Senate was composed of an infinite number of great men, several of whom had commanded Cæsar, and could not bear to yield to an absolute authority, and be forced to obey him who, but a little before, had been obliged to execute their orders. They could not bring themselves to be dependent upon a man they thought no way superior to them, but by an unlimited ambition. They therefore

¹ Plutar. Suet. vita Jul. Cæs.

united, and, under the specious name of defenders of the public liberty (but rather through envy and private resentment), resolved to shake off this unsupportable yoke, and put a speedy conclusion to Cæsar's power, together with his life.

It was in the hearts of Brutus and Cassius that this treason was hatched; they gained over to their party a great many of the most illustrious senators; and waited only for an opportunity to put it into execution. They pitched upon a day whereon Cæsar was to assemble the Senate, in order to propose affairs of the greatest importance. Calpurnia had secret foretellings of the misfortune that threatened her. She dreamt that the dome (which, by a solemn decree of the Senate, had been raised on the top of her house) fell down, and that Cæsar was murdered in her arms. This frightful dream awakened her, and scarce had she opened her eyes, but the doors of her chamber flew open of themselves, with a great noise, which exceedingly surprised her, little superstitious as she was. Her affection for her husband made her apprehensive that this could portend no less than some dreadful misfortune to him; and her alarms redoubled when she found him obstinately determined to go to the Senate, in spite of all these presages, which gave him notice of the impending mischief and notwithstanding all the warnings he had, that his life was in the utmost danger, that the Ides of March would be productive of some direful event, that that very day would be fatal to him.

Calpurnia added to her prayers and tears the entreaties of Cæsar's friends, and it was thought all this made some impression on the Emperor, for he seemed to hesitate whether he should meet the Senate that day, or

put off to another the proposal he had to make to them about carrying on the war against the Parthians. Being at last resolved not to go, because, besides all this, he was not well, he was sending Mark Antony to break up the assembly, when Decimus Brutus came in, and told him that the Senate waited only for him, and that, being met by his order, they were determined to honour him with the title of King of all the Provinces, and to prevail on him to wear the regal ornaments; that it would argue an unbecoming weakness to mind a woman's dreams, and *that it would be too haughty a behaviour to send back the senators without saluting them, and returning them thanks, at least, for their good intention.*

These persuasions determined the wavering mind of Cæsar. He suffered himself to be prevailed upon; and so much the more easily, because Brutus lay under the greatest obligations to him, and upon him he thought that he might safely depend. He went then to the Senate, accompanied by these false friends. He was but a little distance from his house, when a slave was very importunate to speak with him; but, not being able to penetrate the crowd that surrounded him, he went to Calpurnia, and begged her to keep him at her house, till the Emperor returned, having, as he said, matters of the greatest importance to communicate.

Another man, more able, or more fortunate, than the first, made his way through the crowd, and, coming up to Cæsar, presented him a memorial containing the whole secret of the conspiracy, entreating him to read it immediately, because he would find in it affairs of the utmost consequence. But Cæsar, though he often attempted to

look into it, was still prevented by the people, who talked to him about other matters.

Thus he, being destined to destruction, entered the Senate, attended by those who did not conduct him thither but in order to sacrifice him to the public liberty (which they said he had overthrown), or, rather, to their own private jealousy.

It was certainly a great misfortune to him that Mark Antony did not go into the Senate with the rest, for he was not of the number of those assassins, but on the contrary, very much attached to his interest, so would certainly have defended him.¹ Brutus had foreseen this, and, therefore, contrived to have him stopped at the door, pretending earnest business, though in reality it was only to give the conspirators time to finish what they were about, and the artifice succeeded.

Cæsar was scarce sat down, when the conspirators came about him, as if to do him honour. Cimber began to lay hold of his robe. At this signal, which they had agreed upon, Casca gave him a stab with his poniard, and the rest of them surrounded him with their swords drawn.

Cæsar defended himself for some time, till, taking notice of Brutus amongst his enemies, with his naked sword, whom he had always assisted to the utmost, loaded with benefits, and loved above all men, for more reasons than one;² he then covered himself with his

¹ Many are of opinion that Mark Antony knew of the whole affair, which they say Trebonius imparted to him as they went together to meet Cæsar; and add that Mark Anthony, though he refused to be one of the conspirators, yet was faithful enough to them not to reveal the secret.

² Servilia, Brutus's mother, was the most beloved of all Cæsar's mistresses. He made her a present of a pearl that cost him one hundred and fifty thousand crowns; there was nobody at Rome that did not look upon Brutus as the fruits of their amours, and yet he made no

sword, saying: "What, my dear Brutus, art thou also in the number of these murderers?" These were his last words, after which he expired in the Senate House, having received twenty-three wounds.

Thus, as an historian remarks, he who had filled the world with the blood of others, filled the Senate House with his own.¹

This murder, which threw all the town into confusion, filled the heart of Calpurnia with inconsolable grief. She paid to the memory of her husband that tribute of tears and affliction which she owed to the merit of so great a man; and, not content with that, she was resolved to give public marks of her esteem for him, in making his funeral oration, at the tribunal of harangues, which she did with an eloquence that surprised all the world. She did not, indeed, attempt to destroy herself, true tenderness and affection not requiring such violent proceedings. Her behaviour was not like that of a woman out of her senses, but her sincere love and esteem were none the less conspicuous. She sufficiently showed, by her manner of bewailing him, that she was convinced that nothing could ever make her amends for her irreparable loss. She said adieu to all the pleasures of life, and passed the remainder of her days in mourning and sorrow, at Mark

scruple to conspire against Cæsar. Some there are who excuse him on account of his great zeal for the liberties of his country, which Cæsar had encroached upon; but this has not been able to justify him to all the world. And the author of the distich, that is to be seen under a bust of Brutus in the great Duke's Gallery at Florence, did not approve of that action. This bust is the workmanship of the famous Michael Angelo, who did not live to finish it, which gave occasion to a poet to put these two verses:

"Dum Bruti effigiem sculptor de marmore ducit,
"In mentem sceleris venit, et abstinuit."

¹ Florus, lib. 4. c. 2.

Antony's house, with whom she generously divided her treasures, that he might be enabled to revenge the death of her illustrious spouse.¹

¹ Calpurnia's family was exceeding noble and ancient. Most people reckon Calpus, son of Numa Pompilius, among her ancestors. Ovid affirms it,

"—— nam quid memorare necesse est,

"Ut domus a Calpo nomen Calpurnia ducat."

It was divided into two branches, one of which was distinguished with the glorious name of Frugi, which is as much as to say, worthy people. As for the surname of Piso, it was common to both. Calpurnius Piso, father to Calpurnia, was consul in the seven hundred and fifty-third year of Rome. Calpurnia delivered up to Mark Anthony all Cæsar's papers and effects. This Calpurnia is different from a Roman lady of the same name, who once pleaded her cause with so much anger and fury that she gave occasion for an edict that none of her sex should ever plead after.

LIVIA

WIFE OF AUGUSTUS



F all the Roman Empresses, Livia may be said to have done the greatest honour to her dignity, and to have best supported the character of it. Augustus owed a considerable part of his glory to her, and not only consulted her in the most important and difficult affairs, but generally took her advice.¹ She was the daughter of Livius Drusus Calidianus, who, being of the number of the proscribed persons during the furious proceedings of the Triumvirate, joined the party of Brutus and Cassius,² and killed himself after the battle of Philippi, that he might not fall into the hands of Mark Antony and Augustus.

Livia's family was, without contradiction, one of the most illustrious of Rome,³ for her ancestral stock was more ancient than Rome itself, and there are none that have made more noise in history, whether we consider the great men it has produced,⁴ or the inclination of all the Claudian family (Publius excepted) to take part with the people against the Senate, which people were

¹ Senec. de Clem. lib. 1. c. 9.

² Dio. lib. 48. Vel. Pater. Hist. lib. 2.

³ Plutar. vit. Publicol.

⁴ Sueton. vit. Tiber. c. 1. and 2.

always treated by the patricians ¹ with haughtiness, contempt, and insolence.

Calpurnius was descended from this Claudian family, for it was only by adoption ² that he belonged to that of the Livians, from whence he took the name of Livius, and his daughter that of Livia.

To her high quality, Livia joined ³ a beauty which surpassed that of all the other ladies in Rome. Her mind was vast, elevated, cultivated with a prodigious stock of learning, and capable of the greatest things. She discerned justly, ⁴ had a gaiety of temper that was charming and lively, and a profound penetration, which, in the most intricate affairs, gave her so happy a facility in choosing the best method, that, afterwards, ⁵ Augustus never had any serious discourse with her that he did not insert in his journal. But then, she was haughty, ⁶ proud, ambitious, and had, in short, that disdainful air so natural to the Claudian family. She had not, for all that, a forbidding way; and, though she prided herself upon the ancient severity of manner, she knew how to soften it ⁷ by an affable behaviour, and a certain liberty that would not have been permitted to the women of Rome at the beginning.

¹ For the better comprehending what is meant by patricians, it must be observed that Romulus singled out those of the best fashion at Rome, and separated them from the others. As they were the most considerable in point of riches, prudence, and wisdom, he distinguished them with the venerable name of fathers, and the rest were only called the people. The posterity of these fathers were called patricians; and Romulus chose one hundred of them, whereof he formed the Senate. From among the other families, patricians as well as plebeians, he took three hundred more, of which he composed a body of citizens between the patricians and the people, which was styled the order of knights; so that every Roman was either a senator, a knight, or a plebeian.

² Tacit. Ann. 5. c. 1.

³ Vell. Pater. Histor. lib. 2.

⁴ Macrob. lib. 2. c. 1.

⁵ Senec. de Clement. lib. 1. c. 9.

⁶ Sueton. vit. Aug.

⁷ Tacit. Ann. 5. c. 1.

Such was Livia, who was married to Tiberius Claudius Nero (also of the Claudian family), a man of extraordinary experience, and so brave, that Julius Cæsar, who knew how to distinguish true merit, honoured ¹ Tiberius with the pontificate; ² he also committed to his conduct the colonies which he sent to Arelate, Narbo,³ and other towns of Gaul, to reward the important services,⁴ he had done the Republic when he commanded the fleet in the war of Alexandria, which was concluded by the important victory that Cæsar gained, and to which Tiberius Nero did not a little contribute.

This marriage was soon fruitful. Livia became with child, which gave her a joy that nothing could equal but the fear she was in of not having a son, which she wished for with that ardent passion so natural to young married women. There was nothing which she did not do to be informed whether her desires should be accomplished. This curiosity was pardonable at her age; and it is reported that she took it in her head to have an egg from under a sitting hen,⁵ and that by dint of holding it close in her hand, or in her bosom, she warmed it so as to hatch

¹ Vell. Pater. Hist. lib. 2.

² The pontificate was one of the finest employments at Rome. The pontiffs were established by King Numa Pompilius to preside at the public ceremonies; they took cognisance of everything that regarded religion and the worship of the gods, as well as the safety, liberty, and fortune of the citizens. At the beginning of their institution they were but four, and were taken out of the order of patricians. Afterwards four others were added, and chosen from among the knights; and Sulla, at last, increased the number to fifteen, which body was called the College of Pontiffs, over which the chief presided, and was styled the sovereign pontiff. As many and great privileges were annexed to this dignity, great pains were taken to obtain it. The Emperors did not think it below them to take possession, and even to be proud of this employment; but Theodosius thought proper to abolish it.

³ Arles and Narbonne.

⁴ Suet. vit. Tiber. c. 4.

⁵ Plin. lib. 10. c. 55. Suet. vit. Tiber,

it, and it produced a chicken with a remarkable comb, which she looked upon as ominous, and foretelling a son. The event answered her expectations. She was delivered of Tiberius Claudius Nero, who, in his childhood, was exposed to many hardships and misfortunes. As this part of the history is necessary to explain that of Livia, it will not be amiss to be as particular in it as possible.

After Julius Cæsar was assassinated in full Senate, as we have related, people flattered themselves that Rome¹ would find the end of her slavery in the death of her tyrant, and that the Republic would see her liberty spring up again after the destruction of her oppressors. But this murder proved, on the contrary, only the seed of endless discords and divisions, and the occasion of the most cruel civil wars. Empires have, without doubt, their fates and periods, as well as men. Rome had attained her utmost pitch of glory and grandeur; and, according to the vicissitudes of all human affairs, could not but fall back again to her primitive condition, and be again fettered with those chains which she imagined she had so happily shaken off. Mark Antony (general of the army under Julius Cæsar) and Octavius Cæsar, Julius's nephew and adopted son (since known by the name of Augustus), were both resolved to revenge his death, but each from different motives in appearance, though tending to the same end, viz., the gratifying of their ambition. Mark Antony was then consul, which gave him an absolute authority. His family were possessed of the most important employments; and his two brothers were, the one tribune, and the other prætor. Puffed up with this exorbitant power, he thought he had a right to aspire to

¹ Florus. lib. 4.

everything; and, in consequence of this boundless presumption, he demanded the government of ¹ Cisalpine Gaul, which had been given by Cæsar to Decimus Brutus, who was afterwards one of his murderers.

Antony did not find it so easy a matter to obtain as he imagined. The Senate dreaded his ambition, and did not care to increase it by giving him so important an employ; besides, Brutus was looked upon as one of the defenders of the public liberty. It was not forgotten that the ancient freedom of Rome was in a great measure owing to some of his ancestors,² and that an ardent love

¹ Cisalpine Gaul was what we now call Lombardy, a part of Italy between the Alps and the Apennine Mountains, on both sides of the River Po.

² Junius Brutus, son of Tarquinia, sister to Tarquin the proud, perceiving that this cruel prince put to death the principal persons of Rome, from whom he imagined he had a great deal to fear, pretended to be mad, to make himself contemptible, and that he might not give jealousy to that suspicious tyrant. It soon appeared, however, that Junius, under this pretended disorder of the brain, concealed the most profound prudence. Titus and Aruns, the King's sons, consulting the oracle at Delphi, by order of their father, on account of a prodigy that had lately happened at Rome, would needs take their cousin Junius with them to make sport of. After they had made their demand of the oracle about the prodigy, they asked which of them should rule after Tarquin? The oracle answered that it should be the first among them that should give a kiss to his mother. The two princes imagining that this could only regard them, agreed to cast lots which of them should first kiss their mother. Brutus had more sense than to interpret the oracle literally, and soon comprehended that there was something mysterious in it; so pretending to fall, he kissed the earth, which is the common mother of all men. The oracle was verified. Sextus Tarquinius, another of the King's sons, having brutally attempted to defile the bed of the senator Collatinus, in endeavouring to ravish his wife Lucretia, this scandalous enterprise so provoked the Romans that they took arms, under the conduct of Brutus, who encouraged them to revenge the outrage, and made them take an oath that they would be no longer subject to kings. And, in fact, they drove Tarquin and his family out of Rome, and placed the sovereign power in the hands of two magistrates, whom they called consuls. Brutus was the first they selected to fill this high dignity, and showed, by his behaviour, that they were not deceived in the choice they had made; and that nobody could be more fitted than he to defend that liberty which he was the author of. He sustained the interests of the Republic with so much zeal, made the people so sensible of the

for the Republic was, in a manner, hereditary in his family; it was not, therefore, reasonable to strip Brutus of his government, in order to give it to Antony. This was done, notwithstanding; but it was at the request of Augustus, whom the Senate had no mind to disoblige by the refusal of the first favour he asked.

Mark Antony lying under such obligations, it might be supposed that he would express all possible marks of gratitude to Augustus, his benefactor, but other considerations took place; for,¹ being full of resentment that Julius Cæsar had made Augustus his principal heir to his prejudice, he was resolved to thwart him in all his projects; to give a malicious turn to his designs, in order to make his actions suspected; ² and, the more effectually to make him odious, and ruin him with the Senate, he accused him of heinous crimes; and went so far as to affirm that Augustus had a mind to assassinate him.³

These bad practices of Antony were too notorious to be hid from Augustus, who, though very young, knew that it behoved him to stand continually on his guard against a man he had so much reason to mistrust; and, not doubting but Antony was the person in the world he had the most reason to dread and be apprehensive of, he broke off all commerce with him; and, that he might not be in a capacity to hurt him, he was determined to ruin

advantages and sweetness of independence, and gave so many proofs of his affection to his country, that after his death the Roman ladies went into deep mourning for a year, and a statue was erected to his honour in the Capitol. His memory was always held in veneration at Rome, and the origin of the Republic was looked upon as his work; for which reason, when Julius Cæsar had made himself absolute, they found one day written under Brutus's statue these words, viz.: "O, that it were the will of the gods that thou were alive!"

¹ Florus, lib. 4.

² Vell. Pater. Hist. lib. 2.

³ Sueton. vit. Aug.

his party. To this purpose, considering that the government of Cisalpine Gaul furnished great power and advantages to whoever should be in possession of it, and that it was of the greatest importance to him to disappoint Antony in that respect (though it was he who procured him the employment), he resolved to make Brutus his friend, who was yet in his government; he sent him word then not to quit or yield it up to Antony; and, that Brutus might put an entire confidence in him, he sent him provisions and ammunition to Modena, whither he was retired, and also assisted him with men and money, deferring, till another opportunity, the revenging of Cæsar's murder.

Mark Antony's year of consulship being over, the Senate assembled to create new consuls, and to deliberate about the precautions that were thought necessary to be taken against the boundless ambition of this man, with whom they were not at all satisfied, no more than with Dolabella his colleague. The famous orator, Cicero, who, without doubt, was the first in reputation and authority in the Senate, having lately quarrelled with Antony, declaimed vehemently against him. Never was his eloquence employed with more art or success. Being supported by the friendship of Augustus, who had committed his interests to his care, and whose arms and influence gave him courage, he drew Antony's¹ picture with so much artifice, and so cunningly exaggerated his vices and ambition, that the Senate imagined they saw in him a mixture of all sorts of crimes. Never did Cicero so advantageously make use of his art of persuading; for, after having censured the life, and exposed all the

¹ Philippic. 2.

actions, of Antony, he clearly convinced the Senate that the ¹ bad effects and consequences already produced by his ambition were but forerunners of what was to be expected; so that Antony was declared an enemy to the State by a decree that frightened him so much, that he was obliged to get away from Rome, where he thought he could no longer remain in safety.

Antony did not lack friends who endeavoured to justify him of the faults he was accused of, but their efforts were in vain. The eloquence of Cicero was victorious.² The Senate, prejudiced against Antony, commanded him to lay down his arms;³ and, upon his refusing, Augustus, together with the consuls Hirtius and Pansa, had orders to go and fight him before Modena, which he had besieged. The good cause triumphed. Antony's army was beaten, and he was obliged to depend on a shameful flight for his safety. The siege was raised, and the Senate had nothing to regret but the loss of the two consuls, who were snatched out of the arms of victory, and, after having well performed their duty, both perished in the battle. The manner of their death was variously reported.⁴

Augustus did not reap from this victory all the fruit that he expected. The partisans of Pompey, who were

¹ Eutrop. de gestis Roman.

² Vell. Pater. Dio.

³ Appian. Flor. Sueton.

⁴ After the battle of Modena it was said at Rome that Augustus caused the two consuls to be killed, that he might be sole master of the armies. Pansa's death especially looked so suspicious that Glycon, the physician, was arrested by order of the Senate, it being supposed that he had poisoned the consul's wounds to please Augustus. Several were of opinion that Augustus himself killed Hirtius in the heat of the fight; and if there were some who maintained that Augustus was incapable of so infamous an action, there were not wanting others who affirmed that everything was to be feared from so ambitious a man, and one who had such vast designs.

very numerous, took fresh courage upon Antony's being worsted; they hated Antony, because he had much contributed to the ruin of Pompey the Great; but Augustus was not less odious to them, for as he was adopted son and heir to Julius Cæsar, they saw plainly that he could not choose but be an enemy to Pompey's posterity. They therefore united to make him lose the reward of his labours, and found many specious reasons for so doing; especially their seeming zeal for the public welfare served to cloak their private resentment. They showed the danger of exalting too high a man who might one day make himself master of the Republic; that Augustus, under pretence of defending Rome, aimed at nothing but arbitrary power; and that, if the Senate knew its own true interests, it would be always upon its guard against him, as he was not less heir to Cæsar's ambition, than to his wealth. These remonstrances had such an effect, that the honour of a triumph was decreed to Brutus, without mentioning Augustus, to whom they also refused the consulship, though he afterwards obtained it by Cicero's assistance.

Augustus was very much surprised to find the high expectations that his victory had given him so cruelly disappointed. He accused the Senate of ingratitude, and said that Brutus had been only a calm spectator of the battle, whilst he, on the contrary, had exposed his life as much as the meanest soldier, and yet they had thought proper to rob him of the honour that was due to him, to bestow it upon Brutus. These proceedings filled him with indignation against the Senate, and he was resolved to be revenged for so cruel a piece of injustice.

He was in this situation, when Lepidus (into whose army Antony had retired after the above-mentioned battle), being desirous to take advantage of the humour he saw Augustus was in, insinuated to him that he ought not to put too much confidence in the Senate, who were entirely devoted to Pompey's friends, and whose memory was yet very dear to them; that he ought, rather, to think of revenging the death of his father, than favouring those who had assassinated him; and, seeing that these arguments made an impression upon him, he proposed that he should be¹ friends with Antony, and that they three might be closely united together, in order to be revenged on their respective enemies.

Augustus found his advantage and satisfaction in this proposal. Lepidus (distinguished by his birth, his victories, and his immense riches, which had made him formidable in the Senate) had the command of a great army, and could turn the scale in favour of whatever party he espoused. Augustus perceived that, by making peace, he might have the use of that general's forces, as well as of those of Antony, to mortify the Senate, who, he said, had used him so ill; in short, he was not master of either troops or authority enough to compass his designs alone, and, therefore, could not avoid having recourse to the assistance of others. He accommodated himself, then, to the times and to his own necessity; and, pretending to bury in oblivion the ill-treatment he had received from Antony, he offered to make up matters with him; and the conditions were soon agreed upon. Lepidus, Mark Antony, and Augustus, met in an island between

¹ Vell. Pater. Hist. lib. 2.

Perusia and Bononia;¹ they embraced, and making each other the strongest protestations of a sincere friendship, they formed that famous triumvirate that filled Rome with blood. Every sentence of this fatal agreement carried death and destruction along with it. It was resolved that they three should take upon them the government of the Republic with sovereign authority; that there should be no more consuls; that they alone should dispose of everything; that they should divide among them the provinces and the legions; that they should make war against Cassius and Brutus; and that they should deliver up to each other their respective enemies, in order to take a cruel vengeance on all such as they imagined had injured them. And, to make this reconciliation more sincere, and the union more durable, it was determined that Augustus should marry Claudia, Antony's daughter-in-law, whom Fulvia had by Clodius, her first husband.

This monstrous project being thus concerted, the bloody catalogue of persons who were condemned to

¹The river Lavinius, in the Modenesec, between Perugia and Bononia, forms a little island, which Lepidus pitched upon for the interview between Antony and Augustus. When they three approached the island, Lepidus, who was the mediator, and in whose probity the others had great confidence, went alone to visit the island, and examine whether there might not be some soldiers concealed, that there might be no room for suspicion, Antony keeping on one side of the river and Augustus on the other, each being accompanied by five legions under arms. Lepidus, having strictly searched every corner of the island, made a signal to the two generals that they might safely pass, by lifting up his robe, which was the sign agreed on. Immediately Augustus and Antony, leaving their followers at the end of the bridge made for the communication, advanced singly, and with an equal pace, to the middle of the island, where they met; and that there might be no jealousy between them, they searched each other, for fear of arms being concealed; and after having embraced, they three sat down in an open place, where they might be seen by their people. Augustus, being consul, placed himself in the middle between Lepidus and Antony. Their conference continued three days, and the triumvirate was the dreadful result of it.

death was fixed up at Rome, in large characters, the number of which increased every day; and those who thought themselves very lucky, when they found no mention made of their names in the list, learned next day by their death, that they had been added. Everybody's life depended on the whims and caprice of these barbarians; and those dignities, which till then had been sacred and inviolable, were no protection at all to the possessors of them. Consuls, prætors, and tribunes, might be seen upon their knees at the feet of their slaves, supplicating them not to disclose the places where they might hide themselves. It was forbidden on pain of death to give protection to any that were condemned, or even to mourn for them. It was a capital crime to show the least signs of pity; for a sigh or a tear was an offence not to be forgiven. In short, things were come to that degree of misery, that it was looked upon as a miracle of good fortune to escape the fury of these three tyrants.

Never was the appearance of Rome so horrible; nothing was to be seen but trouble and confusion; and nothing was spoken of but punishments, death, and bloody executions, of the like of which, till then, Rome had never been the theatre, except during the horrible proscriptions of Sulla and Marius. Above one hundred and forty senators, and two thousand knights were massacred. Neither age, relationship, innocence, virtue, nor friendship, were spared. No state or condition was exempt from the fury of these three monsters. The ties of blood were of no weight with those, whose insatiable desire of revenge got the better of nature and all other considerations; witness the proscription of Lucius Cæsar, uncle to Mark Antony; of Lucius Paulus, brother to Lepidus; and of

Toranius, Augustus's tutor; and if they were not put to death, it was solely owing to the respect which the instruments of these cruelties (employed by the triumvirate) had for these great men. Never had Rome more just or more melancholy cause of affliction. The streets were choked up with the dead bodies of the most illustrious citizens; nor was there any family of distinction on which these tyrants had not stamped their hatred and cruelty in characters of blood. Every day the orators' tribunal was loaded with the heads of the most distinguished Romans.

But the most moving and deplorable spectacle of all was to see, in the same place, the head of Cicero,¹ the most eloquent orator that ever was, and the most zealous defender of the public liberties. He fell a sacrifice to the hatred of Antony,² against whom he had so often declaimed in the Senate with irresistible force: and this triumvir was not ashamed to purchase the death of his enemy, at the expense of his own kith and kin; for he sacrificed his uncle to Augustus's resentment, and exchanged his head for that of Cicero. Never did a man shed the blood of an enemy with so much pleasure; for Antony would have returned from the gaining of the most important victory with less pride and satisfaction than he felt upon this occasion; and he could not possibly have expressed the joy he conceived at the death of this formidable adversary more than by the pleasure he took in earnestly contemplating the head, which he caused to be brought to him for that purpose, that he might be sure of its being the head of Cicero. - Never would Fulvia be deprived of the pleasure of feasting her eyes upon this

¹ Vell. Paterc. *Histor.* lib. 2.

² Florus, lib. 4.

dismal sight. As this was the first opportunity she ever had of being revenged upon the man, whose vehement invectives had so often provoked her, she took into her hands this head, so venerable even in death, and after having poured forth against it a torrent of insulting words, she allowed herself the base and malicious satisfaction of piercing, with the bodkin of her hair, that tongue which had so often thundered in the Senate against her husband, and sometimes against her ¹ brutal

¹ Cicero's proscription was the point that was most of all contested among the triumvirs. Antony would hear of no arrangement, if the death of this orator was not granted him. Lepidus was well enough pleased, but Augustus would by no means consent to it; he even held out the first two days; but on the third he demanded in return the head of Lucius Cæsar, uncle to Antony, taking it for granted that Antony would no longer insist upon the destruction of Cicero; but Antony took him at his word, and gave up his uncle, so as to procure himself that inestimable pleasure. Lucius, who was with his brother Quintus Cicero at his country house near Tusculum, being informed of this, set out for Macedonia, to visit Brutus, and took his brother with him. But as they departed in great haste, they forgot to take money for their journey, so that, Cicero having but little about him, and Quintus none at all, the latter went home to get some; but being betrayed by his own servants, he was killed, together with his son. Cicero embarked on his voyage, and was some days at sea; but whether that element did not agree with him, or that he always hoped Augustus, to whom he had rendered such great services, would never abandon him, he caused himself to be put on shore, and travelled towards Rome, hesitating what to do with himself; for sometimes he had thoughts of going privately to Cæsar, and of killing himself at his feet; but afterwards changing his mind, he went again on board the ship, in order to go to another country-house which he had near Gaeta. He stayed there but one night, because his domestics, not thinking him safe, prevailed on him to leave that place, and embark again. His litter had not proceeded two miles from the house, when people, who were sent by Antony, arrived there, conducted by Herennius, and Popilius Lena the centurion, whom Cicero had defended in a prosecution for a murder, which would have cost him his life, if it had not been for the eloquence and protection of that orator. None of the servants could tell where Cicero was; and the assassins might not have found him, if Philologus, Quintus's freedman, and whom Cicero himself had taught, had not betrayed his benefactor, by disclosing the secret of his journey, and the road he had taken. These wretches had not far to go before they overtook him. Cicero hearing the noise of their horses, stopped his servants, and when he put his head out of the litter, Herennius had the

pleasure, an insult which was afterwards practised in like manner ¹ by an incestuous princess upon the tongue of the greatest among the children of men.² These bloody proceedings dispeopled Rome, for everybody fled as fast as they could, and, among the rest, Calpurnius, Livia's father, who went to join Brutus and Cassius; but this proved no place of safety to him, for the triumvirs attacked them in the provinces whither they had retired, and were so fortunate as to defeat them beyond all possibility of recovery at the famous battle of Philippi: these two were called the last of the Romans.

This victory might be reckoned the expiration of the Republic, for all hope of liberty vanished with the two generals, who had undertaken to defend it; and the last day of Brutus might be reckoned the first of Rome's slavery. Augustus proceeded to the city as soon as he had made a new division with Antony, for Lepidus, with whom they had fallen out, had no part in it; and Antony went into Asia to keep the provinces in subjection and punish the kings who had taken part with the enemies of Rome.

Being now separated by so many seas and nations, it might be supposed they were in no danger of giving each other any reasons for jealousy and discontent; but peace can never long continue between two ambitious persons. The ardent desire they both had to govern without a rival, presently gave occasion for a fresh rupture. Augustus, who was very ambitious, could brook no rival;

cruelty to cut it off, as also both his hands, whilst the rest of the assassins shut their eyes, that they might not be witnesses of so horrible an execution. As soon as Antony saw Cicero's head, he said that he had done with proscriptions, for that his vengeance was fully satisfied.

¹ Hieron. adversus Rufinum.

² St. John the Baptist.

while Antony wished to be sole master, as if the whole world were too little to satisfy the desires of two men. Their jealousy increased with their ambition; it soon degenerated into hatred, and they only waited for a fair opportunity to declare war.

Fulvia, Mark Antony's wife, was the firebrand that soon kindled it. She was perfectly aware of the violent passion her husband had conceived for Cl  opatra, Queen of Egypt,¹ whose wonderful beauty was so much extolled, and this caused her such jealousy as soon deprived her of sleep, and afterwards of her reason. She was not a woman to suffer patiently an affront of that nature, and therefore, without the least hesitation, resolved to punish her husband by being as unfaithful to him as she imagined he was to her. This was indeed carrying her resentment a great way; but Fulvia, the most proud and impetuous of women, was a stranger to moderation in hatred and revenge.

Augustus, then, was the person she selected from whom to exact reprisals, and, without reflecting on the consequences, she let him know the whole violence of her passion; and, that her revenge might not sleep any longer, she thought proper to spare him the trouble of taking such steps as decency seemed to require. But what shame and mortification was it for the wife of Antony to find

¹ Cleopatra Queen of Egypt was reckoned one of the most accomplished beauties in the world; she had a wonderful talent for making herself beloved, when she had a mind to exercise it. Julius C  sar was smitten with her irresistible charms, and had a son by her, whom he called C  sarion. The eldest son of Pompey the Great was also proud to wear her chains. Mark Antony was rather bewitched than in love with her, and it may well be said, that it cost him the Empire and his life. It is reported that Cleopatra never really loved any of these great men, and that she never had a sincere affection for any but Dellius, who was Antony's confidant. Cleopatra had a son and a daughter by Antony; the former was called the Sun, and the latter the Moon.

herself despised by Augustus (who, without doubt, was otherwise employed), and who was not content with that, but added the most provoking insults and railleries, so that she became the subject of everybody's malicious wit. Further, that she might not imagine his slighting her proceeded from any scruples on account of his having married Claudia, her daughter, he sent her back to her mother, protesting that she was as much a virgin as when he first saw her; and soon after married Scribonia, daughter of Scribonius Libo, and widow of two consuls.

It is easy to conceive the rage *Fulvia* was in when she reflected upon the steps she had taken, and the disagreeable consequences of them. Her love gave way to her fury, and she breathed nothing but revenge. She swore the destruction of Augustus, and longed for nothing so much as an opportunity to accomplish it. She knew Antony was plunged in the delights and pleasures of Egypt, and thought there could be no surer method of tearing him from the arms of Cleopatra than by promoting a war between him and Augustus. It was not long before Augustus furnished her with a pretence for it. He had, some time before, intended to distribute among his legions, by way of reward for their services, certain lands that he had promised them; *Fulvia* opposed it, for fear this bounty should alienate the soldiers from Antony,¹ pretending that this distribution could not be made without her husband's consent, and that they ought to wait for his return. Augustus, whether it was that he would not be the cause of their falling out, or on account of his eagerness to oblige *Fulvia*,² left things as they were, and put off the troops with fair words; but when

¹ *Suton. vit. Aug.*

² *Vell. Pater. Histor. lib. 2.*

once he had broken with Fulvia, he no longer kept faith with her, but, on the contrary, gave immediate satisfaction to the legions.

This was the signal for war. Fulvia, whose pride, obstinacy and passion were excessive, and who was in the highest degree exasperated against Augustus,¹ filled Rome with trouble and confusion.² She obliged Lucius Antonius, her brother-in-law, and all her husband's friends, to take up arms; everything was in tumult, and the city divided into factions; and because Augustus's party was the strongest (its head being present), Antony's friends quitted Rome, and joined themselves to Lucius Antonius, who had retired to Perusia. Tiberius Nero went thither with the rest; but, seeing that Augustus carried terror throughout Italy, he left it suddenly, and went to join Antony near Sicily.

His wife Livia accompanied him on his journey, or rather his flight, which was attended with many dangers and misfortunes; for Augustus's troops, being dispersed throughout all the neighbourhood of Rome, and being informed of Tiberius's escape, searched for him with the utmost diligence, to sacrifice him to the wrath of their general. And they pursued him so closely, that they could not have failed to overtake him near Naples, had it not been for the darkness of the night, and his quitting the high road, with his wife and their little son Tiberius, and travelling in ways that were unknown and difficult. This was not the only risk they ran in their hasty and troublesome flight, for, after having been in great danger at sea, and wandering about in Sicily and Achaia, they carried their child into Lacedaemonia ³ (which was under

¹ Dio. lib. 48.

² Sueton. vit. Aug.

³ Sueton. vit. Tib.

the protection of some of the Clodian family). This, however, they were forced to leave very suddenly in the night, passing through dreadful and dangerous forests, out of which flames issued in abundance, and so enveloped the little fugitive band, that the fire caught hold of Livia's hair and robe, but did not damage either her or the child she had in her arms.¹ This passage has caused historians to make many reflections on the vicissitudes of Fortune, whose surprising turns and changes are such as should prevent us from being surprised when matters happen quite contrary to our schemes and designs; for Livia was obliged to travel over all these countries, and undergo all these dangers and hardships, to avoid him who was soon to be her husband, and the soldiers were indefatigable in their efforts to discover and to take away the life of him who was one day to be the absolute master of their own.

In the meantime, Fulvia died in the East, whither she had gone, like one of the Furies, to rouse Antony from his lethargy; and, as she had been the occasion of the war, the friends of Cæsar and Antony had no great difficulty in making peace between them, when she was no longer in the way.² To make this peace more solid-

¹ Vell. Paterc. Hist. lib. 2. Dio. lib. 18.

² When Fulvia was dead, the breach between Cæsar and Antony was made up by the mediation of Mæcenas on the one side, and of Cocceius Nerva and Fonteius on the other. The rendezvous of these mediators was at Terracina; the famous poet Horace, who was going to Brundisium, happened to be there at that time; * we shall take an opportunity of mentioning who Mæcenas was. As for Cocceius (surnamed Nerva), he was a famous lawyer, of very noble family, for it is said that Nerva, who was Emperor after Domitian, was descended from him. He was always much esteemed by Augustus. Fonteius Capito was Antony's greatest friend: he was reckoned the most accomplished Roman of his time. Both of them were men of so great probity, that they were frequently employed as mediators to reconcile differences.

* Horace, Sat. 5. lib. 1. *Aversos soliti componere amicos.*

and durable, the interests of young Pompey were taken into consideration at the same time, and everything arranged to the satisfaction of all parties. This reconciliation was cemented by the marriage of Octavia (sister of Augustus, and widow of Marcellus) to Antony, which was celebrated at Rome with great pomp and magnificence. Nothing was omitted that could induce the people to forget their past calamities. All sorts of shows, feasts, and diversions, were the consequences of this peace. All those who had fled from Rome returned thither in safety, and Tiberius Nero also brought back his wife Livia.

She was then in the height of her beauty, to which was added a wit and vivacity, that made her the very life and soul of all company in which she happened to be. She had also the most winning and insinuating manner in the world, which was natural to her. One might see in her a noble sort of haughtiness, which she knew how to tone down and soften upon occasion, and could adapt to the character of the person she conversed with. All these qualities, which were not to be met with but in Livia, soon made Augustus very sensible of her merit. This was very soon perceived, by the attachment and complaisance he showed for her, and the famous entertainment,¹ which he gave his friends the first time he was shaved, was attributed to this new passion of his; he was, ever after, very careful to keep himself close-shaved, in order to be more agreeable to his new mistress.²

¹Dio. lib. 58.

²The Romans were accustomed to give a great feast the first time they shaved themselves. These feasts were called *Barbatoria*, and were solemnized by a sumptuous dinner, which they gave to their friends: they preserved with a great deal of superstition this first beard. We read that Nero preserved his very carefully in a golden box, and dedicated it to Jupiter in the Capitol. Most commonly they caused them-

It is very probable that Livia did not long suffer Augustus to languish, whatever a certain historian has been pleased to say on that subject.¹ It is even reported that she soon gave him undoubted marks of her affection. She was extremely ambitious, and the indifferent circumstances of Tiberius were not capable of gratifying her vanity. Cæsar Augustus, on the contrary, saw nothing above him, and did not despair of getting rid of his only rival one way or other, and so increasing and establishing his power, which was already little less than absolute.² Besides, Cæsar had accomplishments that were not easy to be resisted.³ He was extraordinarily handsome, of middle height, indeed, but so well proportioned that he did not seem short,⁴ except when compared to a taller man.⁵ He was then in the prime of his youth, his hair was fair and naturally curly; he had a Roman nose, and eyes so brilliant and sparkling, that it was very difficult to bear the lustre of them, or look earnestly at him without being dazzled, as a soldier told him one day; in his countenance shone a certain majesty, mixed with sweetness, which called forth the respect of all that saw him; the beauties of his mind were equal to those of his person; he was of a delightful and affable temper, lively in conversation, polite in his manners and discourse, and constant in his friendships. With all these advantages, it was not possible for Livia to remain long in doubt whether she should be favourable to him or not. She accordingly listened to Cæsar; and the charms which

selves to be shaved for the first time the day they put on their manly robe (*toga virilis*), but sometimes later; uno atque eodem die togam sumpsit, barbamque deposuit. (Suet. vit. Cai.)

¹Tacit. Ann. 5. c. 1. ²Sueton. vit. Aug. ³Eutrop. de gestis Rom.

⁴Aurel. Victor. Epitome.

⁵Dio. lib. 48.

he found in her made the odd and gloomy temper of Scribonia appear insupportable to him, for he was already very much disgusted with her, on account of her passions and jealousies. He put her away on the very day she was brought to bed of Julia, and, making use of his power to second his inclinations, entreated Tiberius Nero to yield him his wife.

It is not known whether this was done with Livia's consent, but it may easily be supposed that this ambitious woman was not long deliberating between her duty and her fortune, between Cæsar and Tiberius.

She was then six months gone with child, not without well-grounded suspicions of being so by Augustus. Now, by the laws,¹ women were forbidden to marry again, till their husbands had been dead ten months, and were obliged to stay the same time after being divorced, to prevent the confusion² which would otherwise be caused in families by the uncertainty of birth. Augustus pretended to be mighty scrupulous upon this point, for he affected to have great respect for the laws.³ He assembled the College of Priests, to consult them about this important point, whether he might marry a woman with child; and, pretending to be anxious to have nothing to reproach himself with, he caused Apollo and the other divinities to be consulted. The oracles of the gods and the decision of the pontiffs were favourable to his inclinations. Thus, being cured of his scruples, and his doubts being removed, he married Livia, to whom he had lately been a bitter enemy, and obliged Tiberius Nero not only to consent to it, but even to give her away, as if he had been her father. His nuptials were celebrated with a

¹ Dio. lib. 48.

² Seneca. de consolatione.

³ Prudent.

grand entertainment, to which Tiberius was one of the first invited.

A comical remark of one of those agreeable little prattling boys, whom the Roman ladies were so fond of, made the company laugh heartily.¹ The guests being placed at table, the child took notice of Livia's being seated next to Augustus, and Tiberius Nero at the other side of the table. "Is that your place, madam," said he; "ought you not to sit near your own husband?" This served to divert them a great deal. When they rose from table, Augustus took Livia home with him.

Three months after, she was brought to bed of a son, who was called Claudius Drusus Nero. Augustus sent the child to Tiberius Nero, being unwilling to keep it at his own house, lest he might be suspected of being its father; and he caused it to be inserted in his journal,² that, his wife Livia having been delivered of a son at his house, he had sent the child to Tiberius Nero, its father. But these precautions did not dissipate the suspicions of the public, for it was generally believed that the young Drusus was his; and amongst other railleries, it was said that everything prospered with fortunate people, for they could have children in three months.³

This marriage of Augustus with Livia (though big with child) was not, however, without precedent. ⁴ Pompey married Æmilia, daughter of Æmilius Scaurus, already the wife of another man, and with child. ⁵ Cato of Utica, after having had children by Marcia, his wife, made no difficulty about yielding her up to his friend Hortensius, who had requested that favour of him, and

¹ Dio. lib. 48.

² Sueton. vit. Aug.

³ Dio. lib. 48.

⁴ Plutarch. vit. Pom.

⁵ Vit. Caton.

taking her back after the death of that orator. Cato was reproached with having parted with his wife when she was poor, and taken her back when she was become rich. And even Octavia, sister to Augustus, was with child by Marcellus, when Mark Antony married her.

Matters were in this situation at Rome, when ¹ Pompey and Augustus, quarrelling about trifles, plunged the Republic into fresh troubles and a new war, which Augustus ² conducted with a good deal of imprudence, and was therefore not always successful. His fleet was twice very severely handled, and he was obliged to refit it with great difficulty and expense. Lepidus, whom he had called in to his assistance, gave him cause to suspect some treason, and in attempting to guard against it, he was twice very near falling into the hands of Pompey's lieutenants. His misfortunes did not end there, for he was defeated at sea, near Sicily, and, after seeing half his fleet perish, for a long time he did not know where to shelter himself, so that he would have been utterly ruined, if the rash and headstrong courage of Pompey (intoxicated by this success) had suffered him to make the most of this advantage.

This bad news threw Livia into great perplexities, and furnished her with matter for the most serious reflections. She knew that the issues of war are always doubtful and precarious; that Pompey, to whom Fortune appeared to be reconciled, was much respected at Rome, and in the armies; that Augustus could place no dependence upon the promises of Antony, who was entirely governed by his caprice and amours, and not by his interest and his reason; that Fortune, which hitherto had smiled upon

¹ Eutrop. de gest. Rom. lib. 7.

² Dio. lib. 48.

Augustus, might at last turn her back upon him; all these considerations caused her many a disagreeable moment. Besides, people's minds were disquieted at Rome by several prodigies and extraordinary presages that had happened lately, so that Livia stood in great need of the consolation she received from a curious incident that took place at a country-house she possessed near Rome. An eagle, that had snatched up a chicken with a little branch of laurel in its beak, let it drop softly near her. Everybody that imagined they had any skill in foretelling events, agreed that this promised Livia nothing less than the sovereign power; and that the laurel plainly signified the great glory and honour which her prosperity should enjoy. This was too flattering a prognostic not to be heeded;¹ on the contrary, Livia took all possible care of these two objects of her hopes. The chicken became so prolific, that the village where it was reared was called the village of hens; and the laurel, which she caused to be planted, was cultivated so successfully, that in a few years it was big enough to furnish laurel branches to crown the conquerors on the occasion of their triumphs.

Livia in a little time had the pleasure of seeing the beginning of the fulfilment of this prediction, in the victory that Augustus gained over Pompey. For the two fleets met, and the most bloody battle ensued that had ever been known. Each fleet was composed of almost four hundred sail, and these ships, all together, resembled a floating city. Agrippa, Augustus's admiral, employed all his industry, skill and courage to conquer; and Demochares, Pompey's admiral (a most experienced officer),

¹ Sueton. vit. Galb.

exhausted his whole stock of knowledge and bravery, to force victory to declare on his side. They fought for a long time with equal success, and with so much obstinacy and fury, that the armies who were on shore perceived the sea to change colour, tinged with the blood of an enormous number of soldiers, some of whom were swimming about among the waves, and others floating, dead, upon the water, together with fragments of the broken vessels.

It seemed as if Fortune was in doubt which side to declare for, or else that she hesitated on purpose, to give the two generals an opportunity of displaying their valour and abilities, and to make them dispute the victory with one another.

Augustus and Pompey were with their armies on shore, anxious spectators of the battle, the result of which was to decide their fortune, and waited with the utmost impatience to see the issue of this important action. A profound silence was observed on both sides, as long as the victory was doubtful; but Agrippa having had the good fortune to sink some of Pompey's ships, Augustus's soldiers were so encouraged by the success, that they made the air ring with their shouts, and so terrified Pompey's men, that they began to waver. In fact, this accident caused such an alteration in the fight, that Pompey's fleet was defeated. Demochares killed himself through despair, and Pompey only survived him to perish soon after by the hands of an infamous assassin, and thus Augustus was delivered from this formidable enemy.

Never did a conqueror use his victory more cruelly. As this war had kept him in a state of continual alarm and the utmost uneasiness, he suffered himself to be

hurried on by his resentment against all such senators and knights as had taken part with Pompey. He punished them with death, and sullied his triumph with the blood of the most illustrious men in the Republic. He afterwards gave his troops some tokens of his generosity. Of all the honours which were decreed him by the Senate, he would only accept the privilege which they granted to his wife Livia, and his sister Octavia, to dispose of their effects as they thought proper, and that their persons should be sacred and inviolable, like those of the tribunes. After having settled certain affairs in Rome, he went to give battle to Mark Antony, with whom ¹ he had lately fallen out again, and entirely defeated him at the famous battle of Actium, which drove Antony into such despair, that he killed himself, in which Cleopatra, who was the principal cause of his destruction, imitated him soon after.²

¹ Sueton. Dio.

² Cleopatra, seeing that Fortune was favourable to Augustus, was the first to betray Mark Antony, though she was the only cause of his misfortune. She secretly gave up the town of Pelusium to the conqueror, and made a great many of Antony's ships pass over to his side. Antony knew that she was betraying him, but was too much in love to wish her any harm, and so fell into the snare that was laid for him. For Cleopatra, flattering herself that she could make Augustus sensible of her charms, gave out that she had killed herself, imagining that Antony would never survive her, and by that stratagem hoped to deliver Augustus from his formidable rival. Her artifice succeeded: Antony, who was bewitched by Cleopatra, notwithstanding her treachery and perfidy, had no sooner heard of her death, than he ran himself through the body with his sword. But a moment after, being informed that she was in good health, he repented of this rash and fatal action, which was to separate him from the object of his passion. He caused himself to be put into a basket and drawn up into the tower where Cleopatra was, and expired in her arms. Cleopatra, however, being informed that Augustus's fair words and courteous treatment showed that her life was to be spared, only that she might grace his triumph (which she dreaded more than death), resolved to live no longer. She dressed herself in her most magnificent apparel, and laid herself down upon a sumptuous bed, where she was found breathless. On her arm were

This victory restored peace to the Republic, and gave Augustus the sovereignty of the world. He returned to Rome, preceded by the report of his victory, and followed by the loud acclamations of the people, loaded with glory and honour. He was received everywhere, and especially at Rome, with the respect that was due to the lord of the whole earth;¹ and his triumph, the most superb that, till then, had ever been seen, lasted three days successively, which were passed in amusements, feasts, shows and rejoicings, which at last succeeded the rivers of tears that had been shed during so many civil wars. The Senate was at a loss to invent titles of honour and dignities in any way proportionate to the greatness of Cæsar and his family. He was created consul, tribune, censor, proclaimed father of his country, and chief pontiff. They honoured him² with a new name, and called him Augustus, as if he partook of the nature of the gods; which the poets did not scruple to attribute to him in their verses, which are so many shameful monuments of their flattery and impiety.

Augustus's empire may be said to commence from that time.³ The city assumed a new appearance, and the state quite another form. The Republic was changed into a monarchy. All yielded to the new yoke, and those people who, of all others, were most jealous of their liberties, were reduced to the most submissive servitude. Those very Romans, who, at the beginning of their Republic, had, in their barbarous zeal, sacrificed their own children

perceived little marks, apparently due to the bite of an asp, or else she had made them herself with the bodkin of her hair, which she had previously dipped in some malignant poison.

¹ Sueton. Flor. Dio. and others.

² Horat. Od. 3. lib. 2.

³ Tacit. Ann. i.

to its interests,¹ were now offering vows for the preservation of those who had deprived them of that liberty, the defence of which had induced them to become parricides.²

The Senate, whose decrees had been till then so greatly respected, now acted only according to the will of the prince, for the past miseries and calamities had destroyed all such senators as had any zeal for the public welfare; and none remained but some timid magistrates, who had not courage enough to swim against the stream. The Senate was, for the most part, composed of young men, who, never having experienced the sweets of liberty, were not sensible of the yoke they were bringing themselves under; and, consequently, neither freedom in their votes, nor honesty in their deliberations, were any longer to be met with. Justice was crushed by fear; the laws lost their force; the prince was the only oracle consulted; and the mercenary votes of those self-interested magistrates were sure to be always conformable to the will of the sovereign, who purchased them by rewards, which the senators basely preferred to their honour.

The provinces regulated their conduct by that of Rome, being thoroughly fatigued with so many civil wars, and by the rapine and extortions of the governors, who, to enrich themselves, were continually plundering them. In short, they chose rather to obey one Emperor than the greedy viceroys, which were sent them by the Senate.

¹ Liv. Florus.

² Junius Brutus, of whom we have already made mention, after having driven Tarquin the Proud from Rome, was informed that this prince had a secret understanding with some persons in the city, who were endeavouring to re-establish him on the throne, among whom the most zealous were Titus and Tiberius, his own sons. He caused them to be arrested, cruelly whipped, and afterwards beheaded in his presence, to show the people that the love of his country was stronger than nature in him.

Thus, all submitted to the new order of things, without the least resistance; and distant kings strove who should show the greatest marks of their respect for Augustus, and endeavoured to win his favour, by putting themselves as soon as possible under his protection.

They erected triumphal arches in his honour, built noble cities, which they dedicated to him, and omitted nothing that could testify their profound veneration and dependence. Herod, King of Judæa,¹ was one of the foremost in displaying his magnificence, and in complimenting Cæsar. This prince (the greatest politician of his time) had been the most zealous of all Antony's friends; and when he was defeated, it was generally thought that Herod's ruin would have followed of course, because Augustus was extremely irritated against all those who had taken part with his enemy; but the Jewish monarch, who, on the most pressing occasions, had always the greatest presence of mind, knew very well how to extricate himself from this difficulty and remedy the bad state of his affairs, which his attachment to the interests of Antony had, to all appearance, ruined. He went to Rhodes,² where Augustus then was, and, laying aside his crown and royal robes, and everything that savoured of majesty, except his greatness of soul, he threw himself at

¹ This was Herod the Great, famous for his cruel massacre of the Bethlehemite children, which he had ordered, hoping to include amongst them the Saviour of the world, whom the magi searched for under the title of the new-born King of the Jews. It is credibly reported that this inhuman prince sacrificed his own son among the rest; and that Augustus, hearing of this butchery, said that he would rather be Herod's hog than his son. This was not the only action of Herod's that Augustus disapproved of; for we read that this tyrant having one day done something that did not please Augustus, the latter wrote to him that hitherto he had treated him as a friend, but for the future he would treat him as a subject.

² Joseph. Antiq. Judaic. lib. 15.

the Emperor's feet, and then ingenuously admitted that he had assisted Antony with men, money, and counsel, and would have served him in person, if he had not then been engaged in other wars. "I did not," said he, "abandon him after his defeat, neither did the love I had for him change with his fortune; on the contrary, ever true to his interests, I did my utmost to prevent his ruin, by the most prudent and zealous advice I could give, which, in all probability, would have succeeded, if it had been followed; for I would have had him by all means abandon his Cleopatra, who, I told him, was the greatest and most dangerous enemy he had, rally his forces, and endeavour to repair his loss. If," continued he, "my firm attachment to Mark Antony (who honoured me with his friendship and loaded me with benefits) is to be reckoned a crime, I own myself guilty; every well disposed heart would have done the same; for can one possibly be ungrateful to one's benefactor? At least, it is not in my power to be so, for I am too well acquainted with the laws of gratitude. Your Majesty may try, if you please, to put yourself in Antony's place; and you will find in Herod the same zeal, the same fidelity and affection for you, that he had hitherto for your enemy."

These noble sentiments pleased Augustus; he not only pardoned Herod, but confirmed him in the Kingdom of Judæa, to which he added several very considerable towns;¹ and, admiring the greatness of his courage and resolution, at a time when he had everything to fear, he conceived so great an esteem for him, that, next to Agrippa and Mæcenas, he honoured him most with his

¹ Nicephor. Calist. lib. 1. c. 6 & 9.

friendship. Herod, like a subtle courtier, cultivated it as much as possible; he built, in honour of Cæsar, a fine city, which he called Cæsarea, in which were two magnificent temples. He instituted to the glory of this Emperor ¹ solemn games and sports, and gave great rewards to the conquerors. Livia, also, being desirous to contribute her share in these rewards, sent about five hundred talents to Judæa for that purpose.

It was not on Augustus only that all these excessive honours were conferred. Not only did Livia share them, but others also were invented particularly for her. A town,² which was called Liviada, was built in her honour. The Senate exhausted all their ingenuity in finding out the most delicate and most studied praises. They gave her the most pompous titles; among others, the superb name of Augusta, and mother of her country. The poets ³ celebrated her in their verses; and, by a sacrilegious excess, made her a goddess; they erected temples to her, and made a divinity of the most ambitious of women: shameful baseness! which occasioned this reflection, that if divine honours were thus prostituted to women, what worship could be thought of which could be deemed appropriate for the gods?

Augustus also desired to give proofs of his esteem and tenderness for Livia, by displaying his magnificence in her favour.⁴ He caused a house, which had been Pollio's, to be pulled down. This house was situated in the Sacred Way, and took up so much ground, that it resembled a town. After removing from it ⁵ all the costly

¹ Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. 16. c. 19.

² Gaultier. Monum. Sicil.

³ Horat. Od. lib. 314. Ovid. de Pont. Eleg. 1. Prudent. lib. 1. in Symmach. Tacit. Ann. 1.

⁴ Dio. lib. 54.

⁵ Ovid. Fast. 1.

furniture, with which the Princess Julia had adorned it, he erected on its ruins a most superb portico, which he dedicated to Livia;¹ and, not content with giving her public marks of his esteem, he also added many special and domestic favours, putting the greatest confidence in her and anticipating all her desires, by contributing as much as he possibly could to her pleasure and satisfaction. In short, her authority was not less absolute than his own.

To tell the truth, Augustus could not well do less for her, considering the great regard and tenderness she always had for him; though it cannot be denied that there was a great deal of art and cunning in her manner of proceeding, which the Emperor did not find out till it was too late.² She never gave herself any trouble about his amours and gallantries, and was so far from thwarting him in his pleasures by a disagreeable jealousy, that she was very well pleased when he was so engaged. She even carried her complaisance so far as to be extremely civil to Terentia, Mæcenas's wife, who was passionately beloved by Augustus; and though, in her heart, she felt nothing but hatred and envy towards this rival of hers, who had robbed her of her husband's affections (notwith-

¹ *Disce tamen, veniens ætas, ubi Livia nunc est
Porticus, immensæ tecta fuisse domus.*

Pollio was a freedman of Augustus, and had the honour of being raised to the order of knighthood. They tell of him that, at a dinner to which he had invited the Emperor, one of his own slaves happened by chance to break a fine vase of crystal: Pollio being extremely provoked at this accident, ordered the poor creature to be thrown into a fishpond. The slave cast himself at Augustus's feet, and begged he would intercede for him, which he did; but Pollio not only refused his request, but would not even change the manner of his death, although the Emperor earnestly desired it. This disobliging and brutal behaviour displeased Augustus so much, that he ordered every crystal vessel that Pollio had to be broken to pieces in his presence.

² Xiphil. in Aug. Dio. lib. 48.

standing his outward behaviour), yet she exhibited so much evenness of temper in all those disputes which their emulation stirred up between them, that it sufficiently proved the respect she had for him. She did not affect that sort of austere virtue that makes people inaccessible, but, on the contrary, indulged herself in all those innocent pleasures which became her rank and condition, partaking of all the parties of pleasure and amusements which were then in vogue at Rome, and were promoted by Augustus, as well as the other grandees of the town, who had the art of introducing infinite variety into them; sometimes games and sports, sometimes races and shows of different kinds, at which all the better sort and people of quality were sure to attend, and never failed to pay their court to the Empress, who always behaved upon those occasions with the greatest modesty and reserve, managing her reputation with so much skill and prudence, that, though people had not the same opinion of her virtue that they had of Lucretia's, yet she took care that nobody should have any cause of reproach against her. She was far from being as scrupulous as she pretended to be (witness the great regard ¹ she had for some particular persons), but was always desirous it should pass for esteem only. She was often heard to say that a prudent woman always finds in herself wherewithal to preserve her virtue; and, one day, when some young gentlemen, who had been so imprudent as to put themselves in her way, quite naked, were to be put to death for it, she pardoned them, saying that a naked man made no more impression upon the imagination of a virtuous woman than a statue.

¹ Dio. lib. 48.

Policy was the very soul of her actions and conduct, and history furnishes but few examples of women who practised it with more skill and good fortune. Those who were most keen-witted could never discover her real sentiments; not even Augustus, with all his art and skill, could avoid being deceived by her. She knew well how to take full advantage of his weakness, and acquired such an ascendancy over him that nothing could resist it; and Cæsar, master of the world, might very properly be said to be slave to Livia. This was the origin of the excessive authority of this Empress, which was so much revered, and to which sacrilegious and extravagant homage was paid; and yet this, however much it might flatter her vanity, was not capable of entirely satisfying her ambition.

The throne, which was the most elevated of all stations, could not limit her desires. Her joint occupation of it with Augustus was reckoned as nothing, so eagerly did she desire that her posterity should also be raised to that exalted rank, and that was the goal which all her projects held in view. She caused the most important and most distinguished posts to be given to Tiberius and Drusus (her two sons by her former husband). They had the conduct of the armies, and the command of the legions, the authority of the Emperor being always vested in them; and, however inconsiderable the services they rendered to the State were in themselves, Livia extolled them to the skies by the most pompous reports that she caused her emissaries to make of them, and so ordered matters that triumphs were decreed them upon every trifling occasion.

Justice, however, should be done to everybody, and it

must be confessed that Tiberius and Drusus were great captains. The first was not only brave, but possessed a vast genius, equal to anything he undertook. He understood perfectly the art of war,¹ and was so prompt in determining what he was about, that it is reported he never deliberated twice about the same thing. Very severe in military discipline, he was the first in all dangers and hardships, encouraging the soldiers by his example, and surmounting by his constancy and perseverance all difficulties. He was generally successful in war, which was owing to his great abilities, not to chance or fortune. But, on the other hand, what vices sullied and tarnished his good qualities!² He was cruel, arrogant, jealous of other people's merit, of a dark and gloomy temper,³ incapable of tenderness or friendship, affecting, even towards his nearest relations, a brutal sort of pride, which made people afraid to approach him. He was deceitful and dangerous, never acting but with artifice and cunning. A thick veil was always drawn over his feelings. His words were wrapped up in obscurity and equivocation, so that it was almost impossible to unriddle them, or find out his real meaning; and if it was difficult to comprehend it, there was no less danger in letting him know that one understood him. People had great reason to apprehend his dark mistrustfulness, which made him sacrifice to his suspicions all those whom he hated on account of their merit or virtue. Besides, he was addicted to great excess in wine, which he carried to such a pitch, that people, in raillery, called him Biberius, instead

¹ Plutarch. Sueton. vit. Tib.

² Tacit. Ann. i.

³ Eutrop. 2. Aurel. Vict. Epit.

of Tiberius.¹ But, above all, he was given to the most shameful debaucheries, which he continued to an extreme old age in the island of Capreæ, where, in an old and worn-out body, he abandoned himself to the most unruly and depraved passions of youth. Horrible impieties! which have noted and marked that island with an infamy that ages have not been able to wash out. These vices of Tiberius were no secret, nor were they unknown to Augustus, who, in speaking of him, told his friends one day, that the Roman people would be very unfortunate in being governed by a man who would make them suffer incredible misery.

Drusus, on the contrary, was more polite, humane, and honest than his brother, but no less brave, nor less experienced. He had acquired immortal honour by a great number of victories, which had prepossessed everybody in his favour. He was affable and sincere, and so great an enemy of dissimulation, that it is generally thought he would have restored to the Republic its ancient glory and liberty, if he had succeeded Augustus. Never was there a prince with better dispositions. He loved virtue,² and what was to be wondered at in him is, that, in the most corrupted court, at an age the most liable to criminal pleasures, and enjoying a rank that would have furnished him with opportunities enough of gratifying all the passions, he still continued innocent, and as blameless as his wife Antonia, so much commended for her chastity. With all this merit, he could not but gain the esteem of everybody, and especially of Augustus, who, it is

¹ Some of Tiberius's courtiers having suggested to him one day that he should punish the impudence of these people, he answered, that in a free city the tongue ought to be free.

² Valer. Maxim. Suet. vit. Tiber. Tacit. Ann. i. c. 3.

reported, would have named him for his successor, if he had not apprehended that by so doing he would confirm the suspicions people already had of his being his son; or else he had a mind to set off his own reign the more, by having so unworthy a successor. But what most probably induced him to select Tiberius was his being absolutely unable to refuse the Empress anything.

Such were the two sons of Livia, who, notwithstanding their merit, fell far short of the Prince Marcellus, who, besides being possessed of all the good qualities in the world, was nephew and son-in-law to Augustus, which were glorious advantages, and caused him to be looked upon as presumptive heir. This was a powerful obstacle to the ambitious views of the Empress, and always inspired her with a secret design of destroying him. In fact, he did at last fall a victim to her ambition, for he died in the flower of his age; and we shall see, in another place, that Livia was thought not to be innocent in the affair. Augustus was extremely afflicted at this loss, and had no sooner begun to get over it than he had fresh matter for grief, occasioned by a dangerous conspiracy against his life. The chief person concerned in it was Cinna, grandson of Pompey the Great, who had drawn into it the principal persons of the city. This would have been fatal to the Emperor, if one of the conspirators had not revealed the plot. Augustus, being informed of the danger to which he was exposed, was never in so melancholy a situation, nor more sensibly alarmed.¹ He was in doubt whether he should employ severity or clemency. On the one hand, he apprehended that, if he should pardon the guilty, it might encourage others to at-

¹ Dio. lib. 55.

tempts of a similar nature; and, on the other, he was afraid that, by punishing some of them, the rest might be the more exasperated, especially considering that his having put to death Caepio and Murena for a similar enterprise had not prevented Cinna and his accomplices from conspiring against his person.

These cruel perplexities and agitations had such an effect on him that he could not sleep, but was full of anxiety and fear, which made him incapable of taking any rest. Thus, one may see that there is no condition of life exempt from trouble; no good fortune or pleasure that is not mixed with secret bitterness. This incident in Augustus's history shows us that the throne is far from being the seat of peace and tranquillity, since it generally happens that sovereign power is nothing but slavery, and brings with it innumerable cares and solitudes.

Livia, who shared her husband's anxieties as much as his pleasures, earnestly enquired the cause of his melancholy; on the Emperor having told her the occasion of it, she endeavoured to encourage him by saying¹ that he ought not to be surprised that some people, jealous of his glory, had declared against him, because, let a prince be never so moderate and equitable, it was not possible for him to please everybody. "Great men," said she, "think they have a right to ask everything, and to obtain everything; those who are in a lower station think themselves despised if they do not get what they require. From thence proceed cabals, conspiracies, and rebellions against the government; for discontented people hope to find their advantage in any change. You have nothing to do but to double your guard, and cause

¹ Dio. *ibid.*

“the palace to be surrounded with the soldiers who are most faithful to you, which will effectually hinder the traitors from attempting your life.” “This precaution,” replied Augustus, “would be to no purpose; for the sword of those who ought to guard the prince is often more to be dreaded than that of declared enemies. The most zealous courtier in appearance is often the most formidable enemy, and the more to be apprehended, as he conceals his real nature under the deceitful mask of friendship, and has the more opportunities of gratifying his malice and hatred, the less he is mistrusted. If foreign enemies made war against us, we have officers, generals, and friends to oppose them; but if those pretended friends become our enemies, what remedy have we? Nothing, then, remains but rigorous punishments, to prevent their wicked designs; and that, without doubt, is the only method we have to determine upon.”

When Livia perceived that the Emperor was resolved to put the conspirators to death, she undertook to prevail on him to change his mind, and spoke to him as follows: “The honour I have, sire, of being your wife, and of sharing all your fortunes, whether good or bad, permits me also to declare my mind freely and without disguise, which I take the liberty to do with all sincerity. You will please to consider that all bad people are not of the same character; some have, naturally, bad dispositions; others fall into wickedness, for want of judgment and discretion. I do not say that all those should be pardoned who attempt your life (for that would be attended with the worst results), but, in my opinion, less rigour might be shown to those whose indiscreet youth

“ may prompt them to actions which they would not commit, if they were capable of reflection. It very seldom happens that many guilty persons are punished, without several innocent people being made to suffer. If you are so merciful as to pardon these criminals, your clemency will cause their sincere repentance and acknowledgments. Cinna, illustrious by his birth, his name, and his exploits, will return to his senses, and sincerely repent of these violences. An enemy who has been generously pardoned, when one has had an opportunity of punishing him, has no longer the power to hurt his benefactor.”

Livia possessed the art of persuasion to such a degree, that it was impossible for Augustus to resist it. Her advice was as fortunate as it was prudent. The Emperor, who had been very attentive, thought her reasoning so just, that he could not help being of her opinion.¹ He sent for Cinna, and gave him a full account of the conspiracy, reproached him tenderly with his ingratitude, and reminded him of all the favours he had conferred upon him; and, after having forced this conspirator to own his crime, he not only pardoned, but named him consul for the following year and, for his sake, forgave all his accomplices.

This extraordinary clemency of Augustus exercised an irresistible charm; and Cæsar's kind remonstrances had a better effect than his utmost severity could have had. This generosity not only extinguished the conspiracy, but entirely gained him the hearts of all the Romans. Everybody praised Livia, to whose counsel this noble action was attributed, and not a word more was to be

¹ Senec. de Clement.

heard of revolt. Augustus looked upon himself as indebted to her for all the glory that he acquired by this moderation, and, consequently, regulated all his future conduct by her advice.

The Empress did not fail to make the most of the happy frame of mind Augustus was in with regard to her, and did not let slip this opportunity of advancing the fortunes of her sons; for, as this was the most important point to which all her actions tended, she could not bear the least obstacle to it; which, without doubt, was the reason of her making away with Marcellus, in order to pave the way to the throne for Tiberius. But the births of Gaius Cæsar, and Lucius Cæsar, his brother (sons of Julia, Augustus's daughter, whom he had married to Agrippa, after the death of his nephew), were a terrible disappointment, disconcerted all her projects, and prepared for her other subjects of jealousy, as well as material for new crimes. Her policy caused her to adopt all possible methods to obtain her ends. She then laboured with all her might to procure her sons the highest and most important posts; and, although Tiberius had already been made tribune, and Drusus consul, Livia was preparing new honours for them, when Providence, which often confounds our best-contrived designs, partly overthrew those of the Empress, by one of the most afflicting events that could possibly happen—the death of her son Drusus.

Tiberius, after having conquered Illyria,¹ and reduced the Germans (who were become insolent upon Varus's signal defeat) to submission to Augustus, came to Rome

¹ Sueton. vit. Tiber.

to receive the honour of a triumph,¹ which was one of the most magnificent that had ever been known, owing to Livia's attention and lavish expenditure. Tiberius gave a most magnificent entertainment to the senators, the knights, and the people; and the Empress, together with the Princess Julia, did the same to the ladies. Livia did not stop there. She caused a magnificent temple² to be built, to perpetuate the memory of his victories, and dedicated it to the goddess of Concord, near the Capitol. She had an altar erected in it to the honour of Augustus; and, among other rare and rich presents with which she adorned it,³ people most of all admired a piece of crystal of fifty pounds weight, and a small tree of the true cinnamon, which she consecrated herself, and placed in a large basin of massive gold, from which distilled a certain liquor in drops, which became extremely hard and precious.

After Livia had procured all these honours for Tiberius, she set about doing the same for Drusus, when the news of his death arrived at Rome, almost as soon as that of his victory; so that the pompous preparations which were made for his triumph served as melancholy trophies for his funeral. This excellent prince had subdued the Sicambrians and other neighbouring nations (ancient Germans, from whom were descended the inhabitants in the territories of Hesse Cassel and Gueldres), and had made himself very formidable to all Germany, where, notwithstanding the vigorous resistance he everywhere met with, he had extended his conquests as far as the banks of the Rhine. He was about to pass this river,

¹ Dio. lib. 55.

² Ovid. Fast. 1.

³ Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 37. c. 2. lib. 12. c. 15.

when he was arrested by death, in the midst of his glorious career; for, when he was one day on the brink of the river,¹ a spirit appeared to him, under the appearance of a beautiful woman, and said to him, in a menacing tone: "Whither does your ambition hurry you? Retire; you are come to the utmost limit of your conquests, and of your life," and vanished. This fatal prediction was soon verified. Drusus² died as he was just going to Rome to receive the reward of his victories. This melancholy news, which was soon brought to Court, turned the public rejoicings into the deepest mourning. Livia's affliction was so great³ that the philosophers were sent for to give her what consolation they could; and the Senate, in order to contribute what lay in its power to mitigate her grief, granted her the privileges which the laws give to women who have three children. Poor comfort in her unspeakable loss!

Certainly, Drusus was worthy of the tears that were shed for him. His merit was so great, that, if it could be said there was true virtue among pagans, nobody would have a better claim to it than he. Livia was not the only mourner upon this occasion; for Augustus, to whom Drusus was very dear, for more reasons than one, was extremely affected by this loss. But, above all, Antonia, his wife, was afflicted beyond measure. She was daughter to Mark Antony, the triumvir, wonderfully beautiful, and every author bears witness to her prudence and discretion. She always lived with her husband in such harmony and love, that they were both of them patterns of virtue and conjugal fidelity, in a court where gallantry and debauchery were become the fashion. The

¹ Dio. lib. 55.

² Sueton. vit. Tib.

³ Senec. Consol. ad. Marc.

irregular conduct of so many ladies, who indulged themselves without scruple in all the pleasures and vices of the times, and which were authorised and established by custom, made no impression upon Antonia. Those maxims which were most capable of corrupting the heart found that of the Princess Antonia always protected by wisdom and virtue. Her reputation was so clear and free from the least suspicion, that no lady in Rome was in higher esteem. Drusus was the only object of her inclinations, for which reason ¹ she would never hear of a second marriage. She resolved to consecrate the rest of her life to the memory of Drusus, and passed it ² chiefly at her country-house, of which she was very fond, and where, among other innocent amusements, she ³ took great pleasure in taking care of and playing with a fish, which she loved mightily, and made it wear ear-rings. This curious thing drew an infinite number of people to her house, who flocked thither to see it.⁴

Drusus being dead, Livia employed all her care and diligence in favour of Tiberius; and seeing that Augustus was advancing in years, she thought it was of the utmost importance to remove every obstacle that stood between her son and the throne, and especially to get rid of all those who were next in succession. She could safely do whatever she thought proper, for the Emperor was entirely governed by her, without reflecting that, by giving her so absolute a power, he betrayed himself; besides, Livia was, in a manner, adored at Rome, where her authority was more respected than that of the Emperor; everybody submitted to her orders, and that

¹ Joseph. Antiq. Judaic. lib. 18. c. 8.

² Valer. Max. lib. 4. ³ Plin. lib. 7. c. 19. ⁴ Plin. lib. 7. c. 55.

which would have been impossible to another was perfectly easy to her; for, in order to compass her designs, she knew how to proceed silently, without force or violence.¹ Her policy and ambition caused her to adopt measures that were impenetrable, even to those who were most clear-sighted; and it was not without reason that Caligula afterwards called her² Ulysses in woman's apparel.

It was to some secret influence of her deep and dangerous policy, that the tragical and sudden deaths of Gaius and Lucius (sons of Julia and Agrippa) were attributed. ³ These two princes, so nearly related to Augustus, possessed merit equal to their birth. The eyes of all the world were upon them, as immediate heirs to the Empire; for there was no sort of reason to suppose that Cæsar would go out of his own family for successors; and Livia had no doubt that they were intended to succeed, since Augustus had sufficiently declared his design, by adopting his two grandsons, and bestowing upon them the most honourable posts; for he had named them "princes of the Roman youth," and was resolved to appoint them consuls as soon as they had reached man's estate, so that it might be said they had already their foot upon the throne; but that was the utmost limit of their fortunes. Lucius died suddenly at Marseilles; and Gaius, his brother, in Lycia, as he was returning from the Armenian war, during which he received a wound, which, no doubt, was purposely prepared for him.

Augustus, seeing none of his kindred now left, except

¹ Tacit. Xiphilin.

² Sueton. vit. Cai. Caligula.

³ Tacit. Ann. i. c. 3.

Agrippa, youngest son of Julia, adopted him, together with the son of Livia. This step, which divided the Empire between Tiberius and Cæsar's grandson, might have been thought sufficient to satisfy this ambitious Empress; nevertheless, she was not able to bear this partnership in sovereignty, nor could she endure that her son should have a colleague in a dignity which had cost her so much anxiety and so many crimes. She did not long hesitate whether she should free herself of this grievance or not. She practised all her artifices to make Agrippa suspected by the Emperor, whose mind she so poisoned with malicious reports, and put so ill a construction upon all the actions of this poor prince, that the Emperor, taking all for granted that she was pleased to suggest, banished his grandson to the island of Planasia.

This banishment was thought very cruel, because it was very unjust. Agrippa did not, indeed, possess that politeness and affability with which Lucius and Gaius, his brothers, were endowed; on the contrary, he was somewhat boorish, a defect which the polished manners of the Court had not been able to remove, and was very indifferently educated; but, on the other hand, this was the only crime with which he could be reproached, except that of being too nearly related to Augustus.

Thus, the blind deference which this Emperor showed to the will and pleasure of Livia made him the tyrant of his family, and the principal instrument of the ambition of her who aimed at nothing but to destroy that family, and who, concealing her perfidious designs under a false show of zeal for Cæsar's glory, laid the foundation of her son's grandeur in the ruin of those who might either thwart or defer it. Augustus himself knew it at last,

but too late to apply any remedy. He often complained to his friends of his cruel destiny in thus losing all his relations in so short a time (though they were very numerous), which laid him under the necessity of calling in as successor his wife's son, to the prejudice of the only grandson he had left, whom he had condemned to a rigorous banishment, without so much as knowing for what. He called to mind the miserable end of his nephew Marcellus, and of Lucius and Gaius, his grandsons, who had perished in their youth, and in whose death it seemed as if there had been something extraordinary. These reflections, which moved him extremely, also set him thinking of Prince Agrippa's misfortunes, against whom he had been so cruelly and unjustly irritated; and, fancying that he had found out the true cause of it, he formed a resolution to go and pay him a visit in his place of exile. He did not communicate his design to anybody but Fabius Maximus, not thinking it proper to confide in a number of people; and, after¹ having taken all the necessary precautions to keep this journey secret, he went thither, accompanied only by the above-mentioned senator. The interview was tender and affecting. Cæsar's heart melted at the sight of his grandson; many tears were shed on both sides, and those of the Emperor made people think that the fortune of this poor young prince might one day change, much to his advantage.

This excursion, however, was not so much a secret as Augustus imagined. Maximus had not been able to conceal it from his wife Martia, and she had the weakness or imprudence to mention it to Livia. This produced in the mind of the Empress a mistrust that was fatal both

¹ Tacit. Ann. 1.

to the Emperor and his grandson, and even Livia, in spite of all her cunning, could not help revealing her vexation to Augustus. She told him, with a certain air of pride and indignation, "that there had been no occasion for all this secrecy, nor was his visit to Planasia of such vast importance that it required so much mystery; and that she could not but take this want of confidence very ill, as it would render her very odious to his successor, who would always look upon her as a person he ought to suspect, since Augustus did so."

The Emperor, who had confided the matter to no one but Maximus, was at a loss to find out the person that revealed it; and this imprudence stirred up in Cæsar's heart a resentment of which he could not forbear giving Maximus evident tokens, by one of those terrible glances of the eye which he was perfect master of upon occasion, and which threw Maximus into such despair, that he immediately resolved to destroy himself. He communicated his design to his wife, telling her that, since he had had the misfortune to displease the Emperor by betraying his secret, he could not think of living any longer. Martia owned herself guilty.¹ "It is I," said she, "that am the cause of your misfortune; and since I am become unworthy of your confidence, by having revealed a secret of such importance, it is but just that I should punish myself for my unpardonable indiscretion." Scarce had she finished these words, than she plunged a poniard into her breast,² and Maximus immediately followed her example. ³ Tacitus will not allow this, since

¹ Just. Lips. in Tacit.

² Plutarchus.

³ Auditos in funere ejus Martiæ gemitus semet incusantis quod causa exitii marito fuisset.

he reports that Martia lamented the death of her husband, taking the blame of it upon herself.

Be that as it may, Augustus never had an opportunity of bringing about any change in Agrippa's fortunes. The Emperor died soon after, and nobody doubted but it was due to Livia, who is said to have given him figs that were poisoned, to prevent the reinstatement of Agrippa in his favour and the consequent frustration of all her expectations.

Augustus died at Nola, in the very chamber where his father, Octavius, had died.¹ His last words were in favour of Livia; for, after having asked his friends² whether he had acted his part well on the stage of the world, he addressed himself to his wife,³ charged her to be mindful of their marriage as long as she lived, and then expired, bestowing upon her marks of his tenderness and affection.

His death drew sighs and tears from all Rome; for, since it was fated to have a master, the Republic could not possibly have had a more worthy one. His magnificence and generosity had brought the greatest and most powerful men of the city to submit to the yoke. His moderation made it plainly appear that, in all the violent acts of the triumvirate, he had acted contrary to his natural kindliness, and that he was an enemy to blood. His excellent virtues caused it to be said of him that either he should never have died, or should never have been born.

His death was kept secret for some time, because it was apprehended that Tiberius's absence might be prejudicial to his interests; but as soon as he arrived, Augustus

¹ Aur. Victor. Epit.

² Dio. lib. 56.

³ Suet. vit. Aug.

tus's death was announced at the same moment as Tiberius was proclaimed his successor. Livia, upon this occasion, did not forget her usual policy; she affected an inconsolable grief, and shed tears in abundance. The first thing she did was to cause all imaginable honours to be paid to his memory. She had him immortalised, and endeavoured to persuade everybody that there was something superhuman in him, which Senator Atticus confirmed, by swearing (in order to ingratiate himself with Livia) that he had seen Augustus's soul mounting up into heaven; and the Empress, who knew very well that he had not sworn for nothing, made him a considerable present, to reward this mercenary oath.¹ Superb temples were erected in honour of this new god. Altars and priests were dedicated to him, and the Empress herself desired to be one of the number. Augustus, by his will, left her the third part of all his riches, and adopted her into the Julian family, whence she took the name of Julia. Thus, by an odd coincidence, Livia was, at the same time, widow, daughter and priestess of Augustus.

The new reign was signalised by the murder of poor Agrippa. Livia was resolved to be revenged upon that unfortunate prince for the mistrust of Augustus; and, to remove the odium of that inhuman action, she gave out

¹ Atticus did, through complaisance and flattery for Livia, what the Senator Proculus had done formerly through policy: for Romulus having been assassinated by the senators, whom he began to treat with haughtiness, one day after he had been haranguing the troops, and the people being greatly disturbed by his sudden disappearance, Proculus swore that he saw the King mounting up to the skies with a venerable countenance like that with which the gods are represented. The people gave credit to this, and more so because just at that time there was a most violent storm, which furnished the senators with an opportunity of getting rid of their King, without notice being taken of it.

that Augustus had so ordered it in his will. But everybody knew that this was only another crime added to all the rest she had been guilty of, in order to establish her own power and that of her son, which increased daily, by the base and abject submission of the Romans, whose flattery caused them to seek out fresh titles and honours to be conferred on the Empress. That of "mother of her country" was solemnly confirmed, and it was ordered that to Tiberius's titles should be added that of son of Livia, as much as to say that the honour he enjoyed of having her for his mother gave an additional lustre to all the rest. They even voted that she should enjoy the singular privilege of an altar of adoption, but Tiberius, who did not much approve of gratifying his mother's ambition to such a degree, rejected these flattering propositions of the Senate. He looked upon the excessive honours and authority which were given to his mother as a diminution of his own. He remonstrated with these servile magistrates, that honours should not be heaped upon women out of all bounds and measure; that, as for himself, he would never consent to their decreeing him any that were extraordinary; and, covering with the mask of moderation his jealousy of his mother's greatness, he would never permit that her household should be augmented by the addition of a single officer.

This behaviour of Tiberius was very mortifying to Livia, who had an inexhaustible fund of ambition. As she regarded the elevation of her son as the result of her labours, and had raised him to that pitch of grandeur in order to perpetuate her own, she never ceased to din this into his ears. and to tell him perpetually that he held

the Empire from her, in order to give him to understand that his acknowledgments ought to bear a proportion to the favours he had received. Tiberius, however, often failed in that respect; and, whether it was owing to his bad disposition, or that he could not endure his mother's making the authority of the laws give place to her, he seized every opportunity of curbing her ambition.

The affair of Urgulania, the Empress's favourite, furnished him with one, and also afforded Piso an opportunity of showing a great deal of firmness and resolution, at a time when submission and flattery held the place of virtue. This senator had lent money to Urgulania, and to recover it, he was obliged to have recourse to the prætor, who cited her to appear before his tribunal. She was under Livia's protection, and, consequently, very powerful at Court, which ¹ made her so proud and haughty, that, in contempt of the most ancient and severe laws, she haughtily refused to go before the Senate, or ² any magistrate, when cited. Encouraged by Livia's authority, she went to the palace at the very time when she ought to have been at the court of justice; for the Empress, who set no more limits to her power than to her ambition, had made a great deal of noise about this discourtesy of Piso, and openly complained that she thought herself affronted in the person of her favourite.

Tiberius could not well avoid interesting himself in an affair which his mother had so much at heart, and thought that decency obliged him to intercede with the prætor in favour of Urgulania, against whom the impolite creditor was very persistent. He set out for the prætor's house, affecting a calm and serene countenance;

¹ Tacit. Ann. 2. cap. 14.

² Ibid. Ann. 4. c. 21.

but, that the magistrate might have time to decide the affair before his arrival, he stopped so often in the streets, talking to one or other, that he plainly showed he was not very solicitous about the matter. Livia was not the last that perceived it; and, not being willing to expose herself to the vexation of finding the case go against her, she called for money, and paid Piso the debt herself.

It was not only upon this occasion that the Emperor showed himself indifferent to his mother; at another time he gave evident proofs of it, and in a more brutal manner, when her honour was directly attacked.¹ Farilla, grand-daughter of Augustus's sister, having spoken some words that were very insulting to Tiberius and Livia, at a full assembly, she was accused of this crime; and, to make her still more in fault, they alleged that she had been guilty of a horrible adultery, and had sullied the blood of the Cæsars by an infamous prostitution.

All looked upon Farilla as lost. The accusation was no trifling affair, as it concerned both the Emperor and his mother; it was accordingly expected that there would be some dreadful punishment inflicted on the delinquent; and it was probably the fear of pronouncing too mild a sentence, that induced the Senate to consult Tiberius. But the Emperor did not gratify the expectations of the accusers or the public, much less those of Livia. His answer was, that the Julian law had sufficiently regulated the punishment for adultery; and, as to what regarded himself, he did not desire that Farilla should suffer for having spoken ill of him; so there remained nothing to

¹ Tacit. Ann. 2.

consider but the offence against Livia, upon which the consul asked Tiberius's opinion. The Emperor did not at first give any answer, but it was easy to perceive his thoughts from his looks; and, accordingly, he went the next morning to the Senate, and, as if he had spoken his mother's sentiments, declared that (however provoking the lady had been), the Empress did not desire any notice should be taken of it.

Such was the recompense that Livia received for all the crimes she had committed to raise her son to the throne. The ingratitude she met with from him did not, however, discourage her from taking every step that was necessary to leave him in quiet possession of that Empire which she had procured for him at the expense of so much blood; and, to remove everything that might give him the least room for jealousy, she persecuted all those of Augustus's family that were of importance by their birth or merit. As Prince Germanicus and his wife, Agrippina, were certainly the principal persons, and most esteemed at Rome, she took care to single them out for destruction.

Germanicus was the son of Drusus and Antonia, of whose great merit we have already made mention. He was in so high a degree ¹ possessed of every good quality—military, civil, or political—that it was said he might be compared to Alexander as to his virtues, without the least tincture of his faults. He was brave without rashness, discreet, mild, honest, affable, liberal, of inviolable fidelity, prudent, an enemy to vice, a man of a noble and great soul, tempering the majesty of his elevated station with sweetness and courtesy. His mind corresponded to

¹ Tacit. Ann. 2. c. 74.

his birth. He had no sentiments but what were great and exalted, was perfect master of the art of speaking well, and, in short, was ignorant of nothing that a great prince ought to know. By all these virtues and extraordinary qualifications, Germanicus well deserved the praises that were given him and the esteem in which he was held, not only at Rome, but all over the world. Never was general so much beloved by the troops as this excellent prince by his; they frequently offered him the throne, which he as often refused, and thereby showed himself worthy of it.

Agrippina, his wife, was in no way inferior to him. She was grand-daughter of Augustus, and deserved the most lofty eulogies. Her charity was so universally acknowledged, that it was not in the power of the most envenomed calumny to injure her reputation; and this was the more commendable in her, as her mother set her but a very bad example. She was endowed with an extraordinary courage and greatness of soul, and it might be said that she was superior to the weaknesses of her sex. She had, however, some faults, which pass for noble ones in persons of her rank. She was not without a share of haughtiness and ambition, incapable of yielding, and exhibited in all emergencies a heart inflexible against all the vicissitudes of fortune. She was an enemy to dissimulation and flattery, and upon all occasions gave proofs of her sincerity, showing by her words, in her person, and in all her conduct, that noble kind of pride with which her birth, as well as the innocence of her life, and a generally admired character inspired her.

Livia,¹ whose reputation was by no means so well es-

¹ Tacit. Ann. lib. 2. c. 43.

tablished, although to all appearance her conduct was beyond reproach, could not bear to hear Agrippina's virtue and goodness continually extolled, which, at the same time, she could not help esteeming, though she could not prevail upon herself to imitate her. Besides, having been always accustomed to receive the homage of the most important persons, who were very assiduous in bestowing upon her the honours she expected, it was insupportable to her that Agrippina should be the only one that affected not to show her that servile complaisance and refused to bend under the yoke that the rest of the world submitted to. The resistance seemed to lessen her power; and she was the more sensible of it, as she laid it down as a rule that nobody whatever should dare to contend with her. This was the first cause of the rivalry which afterwards divided these two princesses, and of that implacable hatred that Livia ever after felt towards Agrippina.

Tiberius himself was not exempt from this jealousy with regard to Germanicus; and his dislike was so much the more dangerous, as it was secret. He could not endure to see in this prince virtues to which he had no pretensions himself. The triumphs of Germanicus, which were echoed all over the Empire by the applause which was bestowed upon them, and which were so many undeniable proofs of his merit, produced in the heart of Tiberius the most bitter envy. This was the origin of the indefatigable endeavours of him and his mother to thwart all the designs and undertakings of this prince; but this was but poor satisfaction, and not at all proportionate to their malice and hatred. They appeased it, therefore, at last, by the death of this great man, who

was poisoned by the treachery of Piso and Plancina, his wife, who were sent on purpose into Syria, where Germanicus was in command of the army.

When the news of his death was brought to Tiberius, he pretended to be extremely afflicted, but it was impossible for him to make people believe him innocent; for the secret orders that he had given concerning Germanicus were seen in the hands of Piso, who was even ready to produce them in full Senate for his own justification, and to throw upon the Emperor the shame and horror of this murder, as well as of all the other wrongs that had been perpetrated in Syria. Agrippina left that country, in order to bring to Rome the urn and ashes of her husband. All classes in the city then honoured, with their unfeigned tears, the arrival of that precious pledge, which brought fresh into everybody's mind the remembrance of Germanicus's virtues. They all left the city, and went to meet the procession in deep mourning, that they might offer the shade of that beloved prince the most profound and substantial tokens of their grief. Never was there seen so great a concourse of people together. All the houses in Rome were deserted. The Senate, knights, plebeians, women, and children, in short, everybody was gone to meet the urn, which was received with as much respect as if it had been a god.

Neither Livia ¹ nor Tiberius were present, not thinking proper to show themselves in public, for fear their looks should be observed, and people should see in their countenances the joy of their hearts upon this occasion. Livia, however, could not help giving proofs of her satisfaction, by openly defending Plancina, and protecting

¹ Tacit. Ann. 3.

her by her intrigues and authority against the punishment she deserved.

After the Empress had sacrificed to her jealousy and ambition all the victims that were necessary, she thought she had nothing more to do but to enjoy, without care or trouble, the fruits of her labours. Her grandeur and power were become idols, that were more worshipped at Rome than the gods. The Senate exhausted their whole store of praise and submission, being very ingenious at finding out new methods of pleasing her, and inventing new honours to gratify her vanity; they even carried their flattery so far as to grant her the privilege of sitting among the vestal virgins at the theatre, placing among those who made profession of religion the woman in the world who had the least, though she wore the mask of it. As to her making magnificent presents to the temples of the gods, that was only done to impose upon the public. She was not, indeed, covetous in such matters; for, not only did those at Rome feel marks of her liberality, but in all the provinces she was careful to display her magnificence in that respect, especially at the Temple of Jerusalem. She sent thither vases of gold and other precious materials of very great value, as so many monuments of her piety, or, rather, her hypocrisy.

Tiberius, however, could not endure the unbounded ambition of his mother; for, though he himself had as great a share of it as anybody, yet he esteemed only the solid and substantial part, not regarding the show or outside, so that the pomp and magnificence that Livia so much insisted upon was insupportable to him. He dissembled, notwithstanding, as long as the Empress was content with titles and honours; but as soon as he per-

ceived that she was carrying matters further, he could no longer forbear letting her know that her behaviour was not at all to his taste, especially with regard to an inscription that was to be put upon an image dedicated to Augustus, in which she had her own name placed before that of the Emperor. He did not fail to look upon this preference as a manifest attack upon his rights; but, not being willing to expose himself to all the quarrels he foresaw would occur between himself and his mother, he made a pretence of quitting Rome, and retired to ¹ Capreæ, where he passed the rest of his life in those abominations that cannot be read without horror; and, in the meantime, Livia reigned absolute at Rome, where her authority was more fully established by the absence of the Emperor. She even enjoyed for a long time the pleasure of governing, and lived to an extreme old age, owing to her excellent constitution, the use of Pucinum wine, and perpetually chewing a certain sweetmeat composed of a root which Pliny calls ² *Inula Campana*. But at last she was obliged to yield, and pay the tribute due to Nature. She fell sick, and the news of it was soon carried to Capreæ to Tiberius.

Though filial duty was not strong enough in Tiberius

¹ Capreæ was an island near Naples, where there was no port or harbour that could admit of large ships. There was only a little creek for the entrance of boats and small frigates, and they were discovered before they could come near the place by the sentinels, who were continually upon the watch. The air was very moderate and mild, even in winter, because the neighbouring mountains which sheltered it broke the force of the winds; and in summer the heat was not excessive, it being always fanned by the sea breeze. This was the place Tiberius selected to make the scene of such obscenities as cannot be mentioned. Formerly in this island were two towns; at present there is but one, called Capri, which is a bishop's see, where John Gloria, inventor of the mariners' compass, was born.

² Plin. lib. 14 c. 8.

to rouse him out of his disgraceful lethargy, yet one would have imagined that gratitude and decency would have obliged him, at least, to visit his mother, who had given him the Empire; but Tiberius was not influenced by either one or the other. Whether it was that in reality he did not care for seeing her, or that he was ashamed to show at Rome a head that was grown grey in the most odious debaucheries; or, lastly, whether it was owing to his not being able to refuse anything to his favorite, ¹ Sejanus, who chose rather to keep him in Capræ, that he himself might have the conduct of affairs,—he excused himself from visiting her on various pretexts, and, in the meantime, Livia died,² being eighty years of age. Her body³ was placed in the mausoleum of Augustus, and Gaius Caligula, grandson of this Empress, pronounced her funeral oration.

The Senate decreed to the memory of Livia as great honours as they had done to her person during her lifetime. But Tiberius, always affecting a great deal of moderation, forbade them, and would not suffer her to be immortalised. And, for fear they should think he was wanting in respect for his mother, he gave out that she herself had so ordered it.

¹ Ælius Sejanus was præfect of the prætorian guards. He raised himself by his cunning and artifice to the highest degree of favour that it was possible for man to arrive at. He entirely possessed all the confidence of Tiberius. He was so inordinately ambitious that he aspired to no less than the Empire. He caused Drusus, son of Livia, to be poisoned, and persecuted Agrippina and all her family beyond measure. He was the author of countless deeds of violence that the Emperor committed. Tiberius at last became acquainted with the perfidious designs of Sejanus, and caused him to be condemned by the Senate at the very time when this insolent favourite thought that the Emperor was going to raise him still higher.

² Dio. lib. 58.

³ Tacit. Ann. 5.

JULIA

WIFE OF TIBERIUS



HERE is nothing perfect in this world. The most exalted fortune and rank do not make their possessors so happy but that something is still wanting to perfect their happiness. This was the saying of a poet¹ who lived in Augustus's time, and I do not know whether anybody ever verified it more clearly than that Emperor. He had made himself master of the world by his valour and the good fortune of his arms; the mildness of his temper, the gentleness of his rule, and the prudence of his conduct had quite obliterated all the horrors of the triumvirate, wherein he was but too much concerned, and bent to the yoke even those who were most stubborn. He was feared by his enemies, respected by the inhabitants of the remotest corners of the world, adored by his subjects, esteemed by everybody.² He gave the world a taste of the delights of that peace which was so much wished for, and which was the fruit of the victories he had gained over those who were more envious of his glory and fortune than zealous for the public freedom. In short, the limits of his Empire were no other than those of the whole earth; so that, if one might judge of

¹ Horat. Od. 2. 18.

² Suet. vit. Aug.

things by appearances, Augustus could not but have been the happiest of mortals. However, if people do not suffer themselves to be dazzled by the lustre of his grandeur, but will take a nearer view of him, examine his domestic affairs, and look into his heart, they will find that his cares, fears, perplexities, and afflictions more than counterbalanced the sweets of empire. For that supreme power was never free from anxiety of every kind, not to mention the untimely death of his nephew Marcellus, which almost broke his heart; nor the conspiracies¹ which were continually being formed against him, and kept him in cruel and perpetual alarms; not to mention the defeat of Lollius, or the total overthrow of Varus,² events which had such an effect upon him as to make him show signs of affliction that were unbecoming a great prince. If we only consider the unspeakable vexation that the enormous irregularities of his only daughter Julia caused him, we shall reckon this prince the most

¹ Sueton. vit. Aug. Aurel. Victor. Epitome in Aug.

² Quintilius Varus was of a family more illustrious than noble. He had been governor of Syria, and it was said of him that he entered a rich province poor, and left a poor one rich. He was afterwards sent into Cisalpine Gaul, where he caused to be restored to Virgil all his goods, which the troops had plundered him of, and which piece of generosity that poet has so highly eulogised in one of his eclogues. Augustus after that gave him the command of the army which he sent against the Germans; but Varus, suffering himself to be surprised by Arminius, general of those barbarians, was entirely defeated. Three legions and all the auxiliary troops were cut to pieces, and almost all the officers killed. Varus, ashamed to survive this shameful disgrace, destroyed himself, as his father and grandfather had done before him upon similar occasions. The dismal news of the loss of the troops and destruction of the army no sooner reached Rome, than Augustus was seized with the most violent grief that man was capable of. He tore his robe to pieces, groaned piteously, and dashed his head against the wall, crying out every moment, "Varus, give me back my legions." He let his beard grow, and in short, showed all the signs of inexpressible sorrow. This was looked upon as the greatest loss the Romans had ever sustained in a foreign country since the death and defeat of Crassus, in the Parthian campaign.

unfortunate of men in the most exalted station. Shame, confusion, anger and sorrow were the implacable enemies that tore his heart. He reckoned Scipio, Gracchus, Crispinus and Julia's other admirers¹ his mortal foes. In short, Julia seemed only to have been born to poison her father's happiness by the bitter mortifications that she caused him.

Cæsar Augustus's daughter Julia was born to him by Scribonia, his third wife, and he took such particular care of her education, that the crimes with which she dishonoured herself can be attributed to nothing but the extraordinary depravity of her mind; for the Emperor kept so strict an eye over her conduct, that his vigilance extended even to the minutest of her actions. He made her employ herself continually in needlework, in order to leave her no idle moments, which are generally passed in occupations less commendable.² He forbade her to say or do anything except in public, that the fear of being censured might put her always on her guard, and that her words and actions might be such as should deserve a place in the diary which he intended to keep. Besides, all commerce with strangers was absolutely prohibited, and Tuci-
nius, a handsome young man of rank, drew upon him Augustus's indignation, for having paid his respects to the princess at Baïæ. The Emperor wrote him a very sharp letter upon that subject, and highly blamed his indiscretion.

But how could the strictest education operate upon a subject, which Nature might be said to have turned out of her hands ruined and spoiled? The violent bias that Julia had to libertinism baffled all her father's precau-

¹ Senec. de brev. vit.

² Sueton. vit. Aug.

tions, and Augustus's vigilance proved too slight a barrier to stem the furious torrent of such a temperament. The Emperor, who was fond of her to excess, could not forbear treating her with greater leniency than he should have done. Fatal indulgence, which was the cause of her irregularities, and the reason for her afterwards giving full scope to her vicious inclinations!

Julia had great beauty, which a noble negligence in her apparel rather set off than otherwise. She was of a cheerful and most agreeable temper, and her conversation had something in it so lively and charming, that all who approached her were delighted with it. To the fire and vivacity of the most insinuating and ready wit was joined so large a store of learning, that she was able, with a great deal of judgment, to give her opinion of and even criticise books. A graceful person, a smiling countenance, and irresistible charms accompanied her grand and majestic air, which was without affectation or study; on the contrary, her behaviour and all her actions were softened and embellished by that easy and free carriage, which is peculiar to such as have been brought up in high life. Her eyes made as many conquests as they cast glances, so dangerous were they to those who would preserve their liberty; and over her whole person was diffused something so bewitching, that it was impossible to resist her. In short, one might venture to affirm that Julia was, beyond contradiction, the most charming lady in the Empire.

She was but very young when Augustus thought of procuring her a husband, and he did not long hesitate as to the person; he selected young Marcellus, son of Marcus Claudius Marcellus and his sister Otavia; and,

certainly, he could not have made a more worthy choice, for Marcellus possessed all the good qualities that can render a prince accomplished. His name sufficiently denoted the illustrious family from which he had sprung, for he was descended from that famous Marcellus,¹ who showed the world that Hannibal was not invincible; and who, after having killed, with his own hand, Viridomarus, King of the Gauls, had the glory of being the third, after Romulus,² who consecrated to the gods the arms of the enemies of the Republic—glorious monuments, which demonstrated that, in the family of Marcellus, valour and nobility were of the same date! This young prince had an excellent address, a winning air, was humane and affable, popular and amiable, and gained the love and esteem of all who approached him; and people, above all,³ admired in him that growing merit which proved him to be the true descendant of his worthy ancestors, whose virtues and extraordinary qualities he possessed in an eminent degree. Such was Marcellus, whom his uncle Augustus was resolved to draw still nearer to him by marrying him to his only daughter Julia. The Emperor, who was detained at Tarragona by indisposition, could not be present at the wedding, but, for all that, would not defer it. He charged his favorite,

¹ Tit. Liv. Florus lib. 2. Plutarch vit. Marcel.

² Romulus, the first King of Rome, was the first who offered to the gods the spoils of his enemies; for, having in battle killed Acron, King of Cænina, he dedicated his arms to Jupiter, in a temple which he caused to be built near the Capitol, where the Cordeliers' Church, called Ara Cœli, now stands. This was called the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, from the Latin word, *fero*, which signifies to carry, because the triumpher himself carried the spoils he was to consecrate.

"Sed quia victa suis humeris hæc arma ferebant,

"Hinc Feretri dicta est ara superba Jovis.

³ Horat. Od. 12. lib. 3.

Agrippa, with the care and management of the nuptials, and he showed himself worthy of that honour, and acquitted himself in such a manner as fully answered the Emperor's expectations.

The ceremony was performed at Rome with the utmost magnificence, corresponding to the birth and high rank of the Prince and Princess. Agrippa had, luckily, an opportunity of adding very much to the grandeur of it,¹ for it happened that, just at that time, he finished that famous temple, which he dedicated to Jupiter and all the gods, by the name of the Pantheon;² and the solemnity of this consecration was so grand and superb that it contributed greatly to the sumptuousness of Julia's marriage. Agrippa, being resolved to do all possible honour to the daughter and nephew of Cæsar, and that nothing should be wanting to show his gratitude to his great benefactor, opened his treasure house, and displayed all his magnificence upon this occasion. Nothing was to be seen at Rome but races, sports, shows, and amusements of all sorts, in which the Senate, knights and everybody partook and expressed their satisfaction in every possible manner. The Empress Livia was the only person who, in the midst of these rejoicings, had secret grief and sorrow at heart, for her sentiments in regard to Marcellus were very different from those of the rest of the world; she looked upon that young Prince as a

¹ Dio. lib. 55.

² The Pantheon is a famous temple built by Agrippa, and by him consecrated to all the gods. It is now the finest piece of antiquity of that kind at Rome. It is of a circular form, which Agrippa chose in preference to any other, to imitate the sky, and that there might be no jealousy among the gods in point of precedence. There is no window in this temple, so that the light is admitted only through an opening at the top. Pope Urban the Fourth dedicated it to the Virgin Mary and all the saints.

powerful obstacle to the advancement of her son Tiberius, in favour of whom she had formed vast designs. She thought of nothing less than procuring the Empire for him, and in order to compass that great result, made no scruple about cutting off all those who stood in her way.

Marcellus was the first victim that was sacrificed to Tiberius, because the great advantage he had of being nephew, son-in-law, and presumptive heir to Augustus, kept the son of Livia at a vast distance from the throne. The Empress thought proper (before Marcellus could have children) to shorten his days, in order to pave the way for Tiberius. It is not very well known what method she took to accomplish her design, for never did woman know better how to conceal her intentions; she had the cunning to throw over this horrid crime a veil which eighteen centuries have not been able to remove.

When Augustus returned to Rome, he found Marcellus much nearer related to him than he was before, and saw, with great pleasure, that everybody's heart was as much inclined to the Prince as his own. The Senators, in order to pay court to Augustus, received Marcellus into their number, and gave him the rank of those who had been prætors. He was allowed to be a candidate for the consulship ten years earlier than he ought, according to the laws; and, to these great and valuable honours, the Emperor added such others as made all the world take it for granted that he intended him for his successor. But, however charming and amiable were the good qualities of this Prince, they were not enough to win the heart of Julia, who was not sensible of that transcendent merit which was so much admired by everyone else; and Mar-

cellus, who so much deserved to be universally esteemed, was the person she loved least of all. As she was born with an amorous temperament, or, rather, an ungovernable inclination to vice and debauchery, she listened with attention and complaisance to all those who were presumptuous enough to make declarations of their passion. She was constantly surrounded with such of the courtiers as were reckoned the most gallant and polite, who never ceased to make their offerings of the most delicate praise and flattery, which was so much malignant poison, and with which her susceptible heart was soon infected. Numbers of her lovers were rewarded for this constant attention, and it is credibly reported ¹ that Tiberius, among the rest, received from her at that time the most evident proofs of her affection.

Affairs were in this situation, when Augustus was attacked by a complaint, that made everybody despair of his recovery,² till Antonius Musa,³ a famous physician, was called in, and he was so happy in the choice of his medicines, that in a little time the Emperor recovered.

¹ Suet. vit. Tib.

² Sueton. vit. Aug. Plin. lib. 19. cap. 8. Horat.

³ Antonius Musa was the greatest physician in Augustus's time, and had been emancipated by the Emperor. His brother was physician to King Juba. Musa cured Augustus of a most dangerous disease by ordering him a cold bath. This brought him into the highest esteem at Rome, where his prescriptions were regarded as so many oracles, and cold baths were afterwards very much in fashion. Horace, who intended to make use of the hot baths at Baïæ, by the advice of Musa altered his mind in favour of the cold; which greatly enraged the inhabitants of Baïæ against Musa, who had made their town deserted, by persuading all the world to go to Gabii or Clusium, places famous for cold baths. Musa, besides the glory of having restored to Cæsar his health, received from this prince magnificent presents, and was permitted to wear a gold ring as the knights did. The Senate erected a statue in his honour, and placed it close by that of the god Æsculapius: upon his account great privileges were also granted to those of his profession.

This sickness of Augustus was the occasion of a misunderstanding between Marcellus and Agrippa, which in all probability would have ended in a downright quarrel, if Augustus had not by his prudence prevented it.

The Emperor, as soon as he found himself taken ill, deposited in the hands of Agrippa the ring he was accustomed to make use of as a seal. This great mark of confidence produced in the heart of Marcellus a gloomy jealousy, which quite overcame him. He thought it a preference as mortifying as it was unjust, and from that time looked upon Agrippa as his rival in Cæsar's favor; nor could he hinder himself from showing evident tokens of his displeasure and resentment. This was reported to Augustus, and, as, on the one hand, he loved his nephew,¹ so, on the other, he had a perfect esteem and affection for Agrippa; he therefore resolved to take a middle course to satisfy both parties.² He sent away his favourite for some time into Syria, with the honourable title of governor, and raised Marcellus to the dignity of the Pontificate and the Ædileship.³ He acquitted himself so well in both these offices, that the Romans were delighted with him; but, in the midst of the applause that

¹ Tacit. Ann. 1.

² Vell. Paterc. Hist. lib. 2.

³ The ædiles were officers, who were entrusted with the government of the city. They had charge of the public and sacred buildings, the solemn games, and the management of the theatres. The duties of their office also obliged them to take care that the streets were kept neat and clean. This was so rigorously exacted of them, that Vespasian, when he was ædile, having neglected to have a street cleaned, through which Caligula was to pass, the latter, finding a heap of dirt, ordered it to be gathered and thrown upon the magistrate for his negligence. None but the ædiles were permitted to have ivory seats in their carriages. None under twenty-seven years of age were capable of enjoying this dignity. But, though great respect was paid to their persons, yet they were not inviolable, for a magistrate invested with greater authority had power to imprison them.

was given him on all sides, he was attacked by a disorder that no one at first thought dangerous. Musa had the care of him,¹ for he enjoyed the highest reputation on account of his having cured Augustus by ordering him the cold bath. He adopted the same method with Marcellus; but, whether his distemper was different from that of the Emperor, and required other remedies, or whether Livia² (as was generally believed) had given secret orders, Marcellus died in the twenty-fourth year of his age, exceedingly regretted by Augustus, the Court, and all the Empire, leaving Julia a childless widow.

His death filled Rome with sorrow. The Princess Octavia, his mother, was inconsolable. The Emperor was exceedingly afflicted, and the tears³ he shed upon that occasion were glorious demonstrations of the esteem he had for him and of Marcellus's merit. It was certainly impossible for Augustus to find so worthy a successor. Julia endeavoured to behave in such a manner as custom and the rules of decency required, but they seemed insufferably tedious to her; for, as she was then in the flower of her age and height of her beauty, and of all things hated restraint, she was much rejoiced to enter into that state of independence which Marcellus's death procured her. She was not then bound to a strict observance of that decorum which her marriage imposed upon her, but was at liberty to encourage all the gay and polite young men of quality and distinction, who paid their court to her very assiduously. Thus she easily comforted herself for the loss of a husband, who had been forced upon her without her heart having been consulted.

¹ Hor. Epod.

² Dio, lib. 54.

³ Vell. Paterc. Hist. lib. 2.

It is well known that the age in which Augustus lived might be called the golden age, and the most productive of great men. There never was any but that of Louis the Great that could be compared to it. The horrors of a war, during which Rome had seen the purest and noblest blood of her citizens spilt, were at last succeeded by a lasting peace, the delights of which the whole world enjoyed. The whole earth obeyed Augustus, and all the men of the Empire, who were distinguished by their illustrious birth, the importance of their posts and dignities, the politeness of their manners, the greatness of their genius, or the reputation of their great exploits, composed the Emperor's court, where gallantry reigned with sovereign authority, Augustus himself being the great encourager of it. And, though his amours were never allowed to interfere with his duty, it must be confessed that his love for women was more owing to his natural inclinations than policy, whatever some have been pleased to assert. His principal courtiers were Mæcenas,¹ a person of great importance, on account of

¹ Mæcenas, who was descended from the Kings of Tuscany, had very great influence at the court of Augustus. He was possessed of every good quality, but his moderation especially was so great, that he refused all preferment, and would never accept of any higher dignity than that of a knight. Augustus had the greatest esteem for him, consulted him in his most important affairs, and had so high an opinion of him, that if at any time he was obliged to quit Rome and Italy, he entrusted Mæcenas with the government. This favourite never made use of his influence, except to do all the good that lay in his power; and above all, he was the most zealous protector of learned men. He used to speak his mind to the Emperor with great freedom, and it is reported that one day, when Augustus was seated on his tribunal administering justice, and seemed inclined to condemn a number of people, Mæcenas, who perceived it, not being near enough to speak to him, threw the Emperor his notebook, in which were written these words, "Rise, hangman, and leave the court"; which bold words saved the lives of all the prisoners. Augustus permitted him to say what he pleased, and never took it amiss; on the contrary, he was very glad to

his great influence with the Emperor, and justly celebrated for his love of learning, and his encouragement of the muses; Agrippa, Augustus's favorite, famous for his victories and his wisdom; Tiberius and Drusus, sons of the Empress, who, being honoured with the most important posts, held the first rank; Julius Antonius, son of Mark Antony, a very considerable person; Cinna, grandson of Pompey; Murena, brother-in-law of Mæcenas; Julius Florus, a near relation of Augustus; Varus, once illustrious for his exploits, and since remarkable for his being defeated; Lollius, much esteemed by Cæsar; Silanus, another of the Emperor's near relations; Crispinus, the Consul; Sestius,¹ highly esteemed by Augustus; Gracchus, of a most noble family; Cicero,²

be corrected by a man he greatly loved. It is true that Cæsar's regard for Terentia, Mæcenas's wife, occasioned a coolness between them, which was the reason that Cæsar did not place so much confidence in him as formerly. After all, Mæcenas would have been more to be pitied, if he had been more faithful to his wife, but it is well known that he was extremely in love with the wife of Sulpicius Galba, whom he visited every afternoon, when her husband went to sleep. Galba was resolved to let Mæcenas know that he knew of this intrigue; so, having one day invited Mæcenas to dine with him, he pretended to sleep after dinner, but perceiving that a servant, who had also a mind to take the advantage of his master's drowsiness, was filching a bottle of excellent wine, at the very time when Mæcenas was paying his addresses to the lady, Galba cried out, "You rogue, do you imagine that I sleep for everybody?" (*Puer, non omnibus dormio*).

¹ Lucius Sestius, a Roman senator, was so firm a friend to Brutus, that, after having followed his fortunes in all his wars, he had the boldness and generosity, after his death, publicly to honour his memory, and to keep a statue of him in his house, without fearing to draw upon himself the anger of Augustus. And the Emperor, admiring the inviolable loyalty which Sestius showed towards his ancient friend, even after his death, conceived so high an esteem for him, that he gave him numerous marks of his benevolence, and made him consul.

² Marcus Cicero, son of the orator, escaped by a sort of miracle from the fury of the triumvirate. He had neither the learning nor the merit of his father; on the contrary, he was subject to many failings, being especially given to wine, which made him often guilty of unworthy actions, as witness the heinous affront he offered to Agrippa, Augustus's son-in-law; for when they happened to be at table together,

son of the famous orator; Asprenas, and a large number of others who were exceedingly distinguished at Court.

The Muses were cultivated by such skilful masters that none could ever be compared to them. Ovid, the most gallant of all the Romans, and such a master in the art of loving, was the pride and delight of the Court, by reason of his happy genius, and his facility in composing verses. Virgil¹ was in the highest esteem for his exten-

Marcus Cicero, getting drunk, threw his wine in Agrippa's face. As Augustus had not without great regret sacrificed Cicero to the resentment of Antony, he thought himself obliged to repair the injury, as much as in him lay, by extraordinary kindnesses to his son. In fact, as soon as the Emperor had overcome all obstacles, he restored to Cicero his estate, and did him the honour to make him his colleague in the consulship. Cicero made use of the power and influence which this high office afforded him to blacken the memory of Mark Antony, in revenge for the ill usage with which the triumvir had persecuted his family. He caused his statutes to be broken to pieces, prevailed on the Senate to publish an edict, that not only should no sort of honour be done to his memory, but that no one of that family should be suffered to take the name of Mark, to show his hatred to the triumvir; which obliged the young Mark Antony to take the name of Julius. Augustus permitted the consul to gratify his resentment in these trifles, because he had always a great esteem for Cicero's family. It is reported that when Cæsar went one day to visit one of his nephews and found him with one of Cicero's books in his hand, the young prince endeavoured to hide it, being afraid that Augustus would be angry at his reading the works of a person to whose death the Emperor had contributed: but Augustus, having taken the book, read it for a considerable time, returned it, and said, "My nephew, this was a man of prodigious learning, and a true lover of his country."

¹ It is not necessary to say anything by way of commendation of Virgil; his works have acquired him such glory and reputation as must last for ever. He was born at Mantua, or rather at a village near that place. His mother was on a journey, and her pains came upon her so suddenly, that having no better convenience, she was delivered of him under a tree, and it is reported that this child did not cry when he was born. Virgil was well known to Mæcenas, who was the great protector and patron of learning; and it was through his interest that he was introduced to Augustus's Court, and received into the Emperor's favour, who made him considerable presents, which the poet did not fail to acknowledge, and took care to proclaim in his poems the virtues and great actions of that prince. Virgil died at Brindisi in the fifty-first year of his age, just when he was intending to correct and revise his works. His body was carried to Naples, according to his own

sive knowledge and the nobility of his thoughts and expressions; Horace was remarkable for his excellent poetry and most agreeable humour.¹ At that time also lived Propertius, Varius, Tibullus, Catullus, Cornelius Gallus, Quintilius, a Roman knight, Asinius Pollio, and a multitude of other great men, illustrious for their learning and birth; some of whom celebrated the exploits of Cæsar, others composed works of learning and wit, while

request, and a monument was erected for him on the high road to Pozzuoli. Monsieur de Guise, in his memoirs, says it is of white marble, and that it has the form of a dome. Virgil was a man of good presence, but sickly and asthmatic. On his tomb were engraven these two lines composed by himself.

Mantua me genuit; Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc

Parthenope. Cecini pascua, rura, duces.

¹ Horace is no less famous than Virgil. He was born at Venusium, a town situated on the confines of Apulia and Lucania; his father, who is said to have been the son of a freedman, having acquired some riches by fingering the public money, carried Horace to Rome, where he gave him a liberal education, which was not thrown away upon him, for Horace learnt everything that children of the highest rank ought to learn. In order to add philosophy to his other accomplishments, he went to Athens, but the civil wars soon interrupted his studies. Julius Cæsar having been killed, and Brutus having retired to Macedonia, Horace, who had put himself under his protection, followed the fortunes of that Senator, who gave him employment in his army; but, as he had little taste for a military life, he quitted Brutus at the battle of Philippi, and returned to Rome, where, finding himself destitute of money and friends, he was forced to compose verses for a livelihood, some of which falling accidentally into the hands of Virgil and Varius (who were then in great esteem at Rome), they showed them to Mæcenas, who was so taken with them, that he expressed a great desire to be acquainted with the author. He sent for him, and finding in this young poet an extraordinary wit and vivacity, presented him to Augustus. Horace employed his surprising talents in poetry in celebrating the Emperor's victories and great actions, and composing panegyrics upon Mæcenas, Agrippa, and all those who were in power, whose friendship he secured by those means; and when he had gained that point, he set himself to write his satires, in which he does not spare such as he thought deserved censure. Horace was low of stature, and was bleary-eyed; in one of his eyes he had a fistula, which occasioned Augustus to say that when he had Horace and Virgil near him, he might be said to be between sighs and tears, alluding to the fistula of one and the asthma of the other. Horace died in his fifty-seventh year.

there were not a few who sang their amours under feigned names, or censured the manners of the times.

On the other hand, the Empress Livia; Octavia, Augustus's sister; his two nieces, sisters to Marcellus; Antonia, wife of Drusus; and the other Antonia, wife of Domitius Ahenobarbus, daughter of Mark Antony, the Triumvir; Scribonia, whom Augustus had divorced; Servilia, who also had been wife of Augustus; Claudia, daughter of Claudia and Fulvia; Agrippina, daughter of Agrippa; Terentia, wife of Mæcenæ, and Cæsar's mistress; Vipsania, Urgulania, and Prisca, the Empress's favorites; Farillia, Augustus's near relation; Hortensia, famous for her eloquence;¹ Cornelia, and a very large number of other ladies of the most distinguished merit, were the shining ornaments of Augustus's Court. But none of them was to be compared to Julia. She was then surprisingly beautiful; so it was no wonder that everybody paid court to her, which they did with the greatest assiduity, some because they were smitten with her charms, others out of respect to the Emperor, and large numbers in order to obtain some favour by her interest.

Augustus,² as soon as he conveniently could, thought about a fitting husband for her, and, after a little hesita-

¹ Hortensia, daughter of the celebrated orator Hortensius, together with his name, inherited her father's eloquence, of which she one day gave proof before the triumvirs, who had imposed a heavy tax upon the Roman ladies, which they were very desirous to have abolished. They applied to several famous advocates to plead their cause, but they all declined it, not daring to appear before those three tyrants upon such an occasion. Hortensia showed more courage and nobility of mind than those orators; for, after having prepared a fine speech, she demanded an audience, which was granted; and she pleaded her own and the other ladies' cause with such irresistible eloquence and politeness, that if she had not the glory of getting the tax totally abolished, she succeeded so far as to have it reduced to a mere trifle.

² Sueton. vit. Aug.

tion, acting upon the advice of Mæcenas,¹ selected his favourite, Agrippa. That wise and good friend always spoke his mind to Augustus sincerely and without reserve, sometimes, indeed, a little disrespectfully, but the Emperor did not mind it, knowing that he was quite disinterested and was solicitous for nothing but the honour and welfare of his master. As they were discoursing together one day, Augustus turned the conversation upon Agrippa, and begged Mæcenas to give his real opinion of him. Mæcenas (taking into consideration the numerous offices that Cæsar had heaped upon Agrippa, the latter's great victories, and the prodigious esteem and influence he enjoyed in the Empire) answered Cæsar, that he had raised Agrippa to such an extraordinary eminence, that he must either put him to death or make him his son-in-law. This was a rare example of generosity, seldom practised amongst courtiers, who are generally as eager to hinder the preferment of others as they are to advance their own fortunes, always imagining that the exaltation of others is a disadvantage to themselves.

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa² was not very illustrious by birth, but he made ample amends for the obscurity of his family, by being possessed of every virtue, civil and military, whereby he attained the highest power and influence that a favourite could possibly reach, which furnished him with³ innumerable opportunities of showing his capacity, as well as his uprightness and integrity. He was a most experienced general, valiant and fortunate, an excellent soldier, an able counsellor, a disinterested courtier, and a great politician. Besides the requisites

¹ Dio. lib. 54.

² Tacit. Ann. x. c. 3.

³ Vel. Paterc. Histor. lib. 2.

that go to form a great man, he had all those that are necessary to make an honest one. He was an enemy to dissimulation, a sincere friend, a strict observer of his promises, free from jealousy, and of a most winning behaviour, never proud of his grandeur and power (however great his influence was with the Emperor), humble, easy of access, and ever ready to do good offices. He was, consequently, never envied in his exalted station, but, on the contrary, universally esteemed and beloved. In short, there was nobody who did not rejoice when Augustus bestowed his daughter's hand upon him.

Agrippa was already, in a manner, one of Augustus's family, for ¹ he had actually married Marcella, daughter of Octavia, the Emperor's sister, for which reason Augustus, before he gave his daughter to Agrippa, paid the compliment to his sister Octavia of intreating her to yield him her son-in-law and to consent that he should become his. After which, Agrippa put away Marcella, and married the Princess Julia. The issue of this marriage were Gaius Cæsar and Lucius Cæsar, whom Augustus adopted; besides Julia, who was married to Lucius Paulus, and Agrippina, who was married to Germanicus.

Agrippa was too far advanced in years to match with Julia, who was in the prime of her youth and charming, as we have described her. Neither did she pride herself upon her fidelity, for, as she regarded not her reputation, she gave encouragement to all the passionate declarations of as many as pleased to introduce themselves into her presence, and gratified her lovers to the utmost of her power. Gracchus was one of those who had most reason to boast of his good fortune.² The nobility of his family,

¹ Sueton. vit. Aug.

² Tacit. Ann. 2.

the gracefulness of his person, and the gift of well expressing his sentiments, procured him from Julia substantial marks of her esteem, for which he afterwards paid very dear. Crispinus,¹ who had been consul, and who, also, under a grave and severe exterior, concealed a large store of villainy and perfidiousness, was also one of her favourites. Julius Antonius was another of her gallants; Scipio, Appius Claudius, and a great many others, shared in her good graces. In short, there was no man (however low and mean) who dared not form designs against the honour of the Princess.

Such notorious and scandalous behaviour could not but be known by all the town. Julia became the common topic of raillery and ridicule. Those to whom she prostituted herself with so little reserve made her the sport of their conversation, and she herself, not caring what people said of her, published her own infamy, and was the first to make a jest of her debaucheries. Some of her lovers asking her one day how it came to pass that her children were so like Agrippa, who, in all probability, was not their father, she answered, laughing, that she never took a passenger² except when her vessel was full; thus making a jest of that which ought to have caused her the greatest shame and confusion!

I know not whether any credit may be given to the report of Augustus's having had too much complaisance for his daughter. The extraordinary indulgence that he showed her gave occasion to censures that were not much to his honour,³ and the banishment of Ovid corroborated these suspicions. It is credibly affirmed that this poet,

¹ Vell. Patere. Hist. lib. 2.

² Numquam, nisi plena navi, tollo vectorem. Macrob. lib. ii. c. 5.

³ Aurel. Victor, Epitom. in Aug.

who was so long the ornament of Rome, was deeply in love with Julia, and was far from being hated by her. It is said that he one day surprised the Emperor taking liberties with Julia, which were not very usual between a father and his daughter; an unlucky accident for Ovid, whose curiosity was severely punished by a rigorous exile, which, nevertheless, was given out to be due to quite another sort of crime! Be this true or not, it is certain that Caligula afterwards ¹ did not scruple to say that his mother, Agrippina, was the fruit of the incestuous amours of Augustus and Julia.

She was a second time set free by the death of Agrippa, who was regretted by all the world, and especially by Augustus, who chiefly owed his fortune to the wisdom and bravery of that great man. Julia was then with child, and soon after was delivered of a son, who was called Agrippa Postumus. It may be imagined that she was easily comforted for the loss of a husband, who was too well acquainted with her behavior not to have a very bad opinion of her. Her mourning was, accordingly, ceremonious, and not sincere; for he was scarce dead, when, finding herself once more at liberty, and not much restrained by the presence of her father, who was often ² obliged to leave Rome on account of disturbances in one or other of the provinces, she was resolved to deny herself nothing, but to gratify her vicious passions without bounds.

This irregular conduct of hers was well enough known to Tiberius, who, in Marcellus's lifetime, had sufficient proofs of her not being of an unkind disposition. It was to him, however, that Augustus married his daughter,

¹ Sueton. vit. Cai.

² Vell. Paterc. Histor. lib. 2.

after having hesitated some time whether he should give her to a senator or a knight.¹ It was no small affliction to Tiberius to be forced to part with his wife Agrippina (by whom he had had his son Drusus, and whom he loved infinitely), to marry Julia, with whose character he was so well acquainted; but it was the Emperor that spoke, and, besides, as he knew it could not but be a considerable step to the throne, his ambition got the better of all other considerations; he divorced Agrippina and married Julia. It was soon observed that his having parted with his first wife was a great grief to him; for, meeting her once by chance, he changed countenance so much that the company soon perceived how far he was from being cured of his affection for her, and that she was by no means indifferent to him, for which reason Agrippina was requested to avoid him as much as possible, for fear that Tiberius's dislike to Julia should increase in proportion to his love for the other.

These precautions being taken, there seemed to be a tolerable understanding between the newly married pair, and people even thought that they were more or less fond of each other; but, alas! this state of things was only of short duration. Tiberius was well informed of the life she led; and for her part, she despised him as being her inferior, and because his gloomy and surly humour was not at all agreeable to her gay and wanton disposition. In short, the wedding bonds became insupportable chains to both of them, and their mutual hatred went so far (especially after the death of a son they had), that, a historian tells us, they did not cohabit together.²

Then it was that Julia, no longer exercising any

¹ *Sueton. vit. Aug. 63. vit. Tib. 7.* ² *Sueton. vit. Tib. c. 7.*

restraint, gave herself up entirely to all manner of excesses. Those considerations, which one would imagine were capable of making an impression on the most dissolute and abandoned, had no sort of effect upon her, whose ungovernable appetites hurried her away in spite of duty and all obstacles. Neither the shame she brought upon herself, nor the reflection upon her birth, which she so much dishonoured, nor the indignation of her father, with which she was threatened, were able to keep her within the bounds of decency. All those who attempted to advise her she reckoned intolerably impertinent, and listened only to the poisonous and tainted lessons of her paramours, who were a set of the most debauched wretches, and easily infused their detestable and corrupted maxims into a heart that offered no resistance.

Tiberius, who could not remain an unconcerned spectator of all these disorders, determined to leave Rome, under pretence of being weary of fatigues and business. It cost him a great deal of trouble to get leave, for Livia, his mother,¹ besought him, with tears and entreaties, to stay; and the Emperor made bitter and very moving complaints to the Senate that Tiberius persisted in his resolution to forsake him; but he was inflexible, so they were forced to consent at last,² when they saw him so obstinate in his design, that, upon their continuing to oppose him, he abstained from eating during four days.³ He then quitted Rome in a fury; went to Ostia without speaking to or saluting anybody, and landed at Rhodes, where he passed many a tedious and melancholy hour.

¹ Vell. Paterc. Hist. lib. 2.

² Tacit. Ann. 1.

³ Sueton. vit. Tib. c. 10.

It is said that Tiberius had many reasons for this retirement. He was apprehensive that the young Princes Lucius and Gaius might be jealous of him, or rather, he was jealous of them; for he could not endure to see them preferred to the highest dignities, and looked upon them as the apparent heirs of the Empire. He also imagined that his absence would add to his importance, as he would thereby become more necessary; for, as he knew he had done the Republic great services, he took it for granted that they would not be able to do without him. But it is certain that his chief reason for leaving Rome was the vexation that the horrible irregularities of his wife caused him, the more so because he dared not put her away, nor so much as reprimand her, for fear of provoking Augustus. He knew that she took a good deal of pains to give the Emperor a bad impression of him, by the letters which she continually wrote to him with that intent, which were full of invectives and complaints; these letters were supposed to be the work of one of her gallants, and in them nothing was omitted that could make him appear in the blackest colours.

Tiberius's absence furnished Julia with an opportunity to ruin herself entirely; for there was then nobody to be a check upon her, and, consequently, no bounds were set to her vicious appetites, which a long practice of gratifying had rendered so habitual, that the miserable woman found it impossible to act otherwise. Senators, knights, consuls, all were welcome. She was not one of those nice, scrupulous ladies who make a secret of their amours, and conceal them under a grave and demure exterior; so much precaution would have been an insufferable restraint to her. She received her lovers by

troops,¹ and ran wild with them about the streets of Rome in the night, and afterwards went and partook of suppers and entertainments that they had prepared for her, which she only quitted to dishonour² every corner of the town with her prostitutions, which she had the impudence to practise even on the Orators' tribunal, where her father had caused to be published such severe edicts against adultery,³ without observing any restraint or considering anything but the gratification of her furious appetites. All this was not sufficient; but, as if it had been her whole study how she could possibly carry her excesses further still, she took it in her head to have placed every day on the statue of Marsyas⁴ as many crowns as she had committed crimes during the night.⁵

If all this were not attested by authors whose veracity has never been called in question, nobody would give credit to it. In fact, how inexpressibly shameful was it for the daughter of the master of the world to divest herself of all modesty and decency, and even to glory in her abominations! The Emperor was afterwards thoroughly informed of them, but too late to apply any remedy. It is a fatal misfortune attending princes, that

¹ Admissos gregatim adulteros.

² Vell. Pat. Hist. lib. 2.

³ Dio. lib. 54. Xiph. in. Aug.

⁴ Plin. lib. 21. c. 11. Senec. de Benef.

⁵ Marsyas was a famous player on the flute in Phrygia, who was so conceited as to challenge Apollo. The god (as may well be imagined) came off conqueror, and in order to punish the insolence and presumption of his rival, he had him flayed alive. Others say that Marsyas was a priest of Bacchus. His statue was erected in every free town, as a mark of its liberty, because Bacchus was also called Liber, which is as much as to say, "free." Be that as it may, there was at Rome a statue of Marsyas in the square called Forum Romanum, which was looked upon either as a monument of liberty, or of Appollo's victory. It afterwards became a custom for the lawyers to place, upon this statue, as many crowns as they had gained cases; and it was in imitation of them that Julia came coronari iubebat ab iis quos in illa nocturna palestra valentissimos colluctatores experta erat. Muretus on Seneca.

they are the last who are acquainted with the affairs of their own family, and, at the same time, they know everything which passes elsewhere.

It is, however, very true that Augustus was not quite ignorant of his daughter's licentious conduct, for there were not wanting persons to give him hints of it; but, whether he was loth to believe these reports, or that his journeys and the multiplicity of his affairs diverted his thoughts from examining into those matters, he left her entirely at liberty, till, being fully informed of those scandalous proceedings, he gave himself up to grief beyond what he had ever felt upon other occasions.

At first nothing would satisfy him but treating Julia with the utmost severity. Sometimes he had a mind to put her to death, and, soon after, changing his mind, was resolved to banish her into some desolate island. When he reflected on her prostitutions and most shameful behaviour, he was so overwhelmed with confusion, that he hid himself for a great while, and would receive no visits; and then it was that, being in the greatest degree sensible of all the affliction a father is capable of feeling on such an occasion, his rage against Julia was carried to its utmost extent. He wrote a long letter to the Senate, containing all the details of his misfortune, and in terms so pathetic and moving, that his excess of grief and affliction appeared in every line of his epistle.

When he had time to cool a little, natural affection took the place of anger, and he repented that he had published his daughter's crimes, which, unfortunately, he had been ignorant of till then, or else had neglected to take the proper measures concerning them. After that, he cursed his daughter who was the cause of them,

and bewailed the loss of Agrippa and Mæcenas, who would either have prevented these evils by their good advice, or at least have comforted him under them. So true it is, that nothing can make one amends for the loss of a sincere and disinterested friend. Augustus, among so many millions of subjects, was not able to find two who could take the place of Mæcenas and Agrippa.

The Emperor, in the meantime, was determined not to allow the corrupters of Julia to go unpunished. He made a strict search for them, but yet did not chastise them all equally. In the first transports of his rage, he fell upon one of these miserable delinquents, and, forgetting his own dignity, stooped so low as to beat him severely with his fist, till the criminal reproached him with the breach of his own law as to the penalties in cases of adultery, whereat he was so much ashamed,¹ that he did not appear in public for a long time. Sempronius Gracchus was banished to Cercina, an island in the African sea, where Tiberius afterwards, to avenge the affront he had received, put him to death. Crispinus, Claudius and Scipio were also condemned to banishment, which was thought a milder punishment than they deserved.

Julius Antonius, the most illustrious of all her lovers, did not come off so well. He fell a sacrifice to Cæsar's resentment; and, to say the truth, he was the most blamable, being under infinite obligations to the Emperor; for, after the battle of Actium and the death of Mark Antony, Augustus gave a singular instance of his moderation and clemency, not only pardoning the son of his enemy, but giving him² the pontificate, the consul-

¹ Plut. Tacit. Ann. i. Vell. Paterc. Senec. de Clement.

² Vell. Paterc. Hist. lib. 2.

ship, and several governments. He did not stop there, but honoured him by becoming a connection of his by giving him a daughter of Octavia, his sister, to wife. Julius Antonius, notwithstanding all these favours, being bewitched by the beauty of Julia, and having the misfortune to be agreeable to her, forgot all this, and rushed headlong to the gratification of his passions. He became the seducer of his benefactor's daughter, which ingratitude cost him his life. Some say that he killed himself, to avoid a worse death that was preparing for him; others affirm that he was formally condemned and executed in consequence of the sentence pronounced against him for the crimes of adultery and treason. Be that as it may, it is certain that his amours with Julia were the occasion of his death, and that he owed his ruin to love, as his father had done.

The Princess had her share in the punishment, for Augustus banished her to the island of Pandateria; and, being apprehensive that her gallants might visit her, he expressly forbade that anybody should presume to go thither without his permission; and, when any man asked his leave to do so, Augustus¹ would examine, with great strictness and attention, their size, age, colour of their hair, their features, the blemishes or particular marks on their body, in order, by these precautions, to hinder² anyone from seeing her in disguise, imagining that, in case he should be deceived, in spite of his vigilance, and any lover should venture to transgress his orders, he might be able to find him out by these marks and tokens.

Phœbe, who had been given her freedom by Julia, and was her associate and confidante in all her prostitutions,

¹ Dio. lib. 54.

² Sueton. vit. Aug.

anticipated the punishment she deserved by hanging herself; and Augustus asserted that it would have rejoiced him if his daughter had imitated her. Nobody doubted but he spoke sincerely, for he did not feel the death of those who belonged to him so keenly as their dishonour; and it was observed that he lamented his condition whenever he thought of his daughter, the other Julia, his grand-daughter, who was as debauched as her mother, and of Agrippa Postumus.

Tiberius was all this while at Rhodes, where he was impatiently indulging his spleen and ill humour, when he was informed of what had taken place at Rome, and how the Emperor had punished Julia. He was extremely glad to be revenged upon her for the affronts he had received; but, as he was master of the art of dissimulation, he affected a false compassion for her, and wrote an artful letter to the Emperor, whom he entreated to have pity on her, and to excuse her weakness, which, perhaps, had been represented in too unfavourable a light; to make some allowances for the liveliness of her temper, and to abate somewhat of his severity for his sake. Thus he pretended to have a great affection for his wife, and to feel her misfortunes very keenly, when, at the same time, nothing could have given him greater pleasure than her sufferings.

The people were touched with compassion for her, and begged for her return and forgiveness with more sincerity, but with no better success. Augustus was implacable, and swore that fire and water should sooner agree together than he would consent to her return. Cæsar's obstinacy in this respect increased the people's desire to obtain their request; they redoubled their ef-

forts, and, in order that the Emperor might be disengaged from his oath, and have it in his power to recall her without being guilty of perjury, they threw into the Tiber a large number of lighted torches, that the ridiculous prodigy of a union of fire and water might thereby be brought about. But Augustus was not to be prevailed on to alter his mind, and, hearing that there was a design to carry her off by force, he changed the place of her banishment, and sent her to Rhegium in Calabria, where she was treated with a little less rigour; but he first dissolved the marriage that he had obliged Tiberius to contract with her.

Augustus died, and it was generally supposed that Julia's exile would end with her father's life, and that Tiberius would recall her, since he had interested himself so much in her behalf. But the new Emperor soon showed that his conduct had been dictated by policy, not by love; he had suffered too much annoyance from Julia's behaviour to pardon her, so that he no sooner grasped the reins of government, than he forgot all he had written to Augustus in her favour. He immediately forbade her to stir out of her house, and deprived her of the little money that her father had allowed her, under pretence that there was no mention made of it in Cæsar's will. In short, he so contrived matters, that she perished in hunger and misery. It cannot be said that this Princess was much to be pitied, since it is certain that her crimes did not deserve a less punishment.

LIVIA ORESTILLA, LOLLIA PAULINA
AND CÆSONIA

WIVES OF CALIGULA



HE Emperor Gaius was son of Germanicus and Agrippina.¹ He was also called Caligula, from the little boots which he wore, after the manner of the soldiers, among whom he was bred,² and this bringing up gained him the affection of the troops.³ He passed some of his youth with Tiberius in the island of Capræ, where he was a witness of all those abominations into which that Emperor plunged himself, and which he afterwards imitated. He also learned there the art of dissimulation (so necessary in Courts), and had an opportunity of acquiring and practising that great degree of cunning which enabled him to accommodate himself to the odd and dangerous humour of Tiberius, from whom he found means to conceal all his vices by most profound and matchless artifice; he contrived to

¹ Tacit. Ann. i.

² Gaius Cæsar Caligula was born on the last day of August, during the consulship of his father and of C. Fonteius Capito, at the time when the legions, commanded by Germanicus, were in their winter quarters; which the Romans looked upon as an omen of his future grandeur. And as soon as he became Emperor these two lines, to the same purport, were published:

In castris genitus, patriis nutritus in armis,
Jam designati principis omen erat.

³ Sueton. vit. Cai.

insinuate himself into the good graces, and preserve the esteem, of the Emperor, in spite of the many snares that were laid for him by his enemies, who did their utmost to make him complain, that they might have it in their power to ruin him. By thus wearing a mask, he deceived even Tiberius, who, of all men living, was the most impenetrable in his designs and words. His being perpetually obliged to act such a part as this could not but have been extremely disagreeable to him, but it was absolutely necessary to his designs. He was naturally haughty, proud, cruel and insolent, and altogether so different from what he pretended to be when in awe of Tiberius, that it afterwards occasioned people to say that there never was a better servant, nor a worse master.¹

His first wife was Junia Claudia, daughter of Junius Silanus, remarkable for the antiquity of his family. He married her by the orders of Tiberius, for which he pretended to have the greatest respect; and, though he did not like his wife, he took care to treat her with great kindness. She died in child-bed, which he was rather glad of than otherwise, especially as she was not a person who could contribute much to the accomplishment of his vast designs. For this reason, he looked about for one that was more for his purpose, and at last pitched upon Ennia, wife of Macro, præfect of the prætorian guards,²

¹ Sueton. vit. Cai. c. 20.

² After the Emperors had entirely destroyed the liberty of Rome, these prætorian cohorts were appointed guards to the Emperor and to the city. They had a camp in the middle of Rome, and became so powerful, or rather so insolent, that, when any of the Emperors were killed, they took upon themselves to choose another, and the Senate was often obliged to confirm their choice. Augustus made two of them captains of his guard. Whoever were possessed of those posts, became

who succeeded Sejanus in his post and in the favour of the Emperor, though he was as unworthy a man as the other. This woman had an inexhaustible fund of ambition, and, as her vanity had been fully gratified by the vast degree of influence and almost absolute power that her husband had exercised under Tiberius (who was drawing fast towards his end), there were no ways or means, however bad, that she was not capable of putting in practice to perpetuate her authority.

Caligula had no great trouble to gain over a woman of such a disposition; nor was it any wonder that he found her so ready to listen to his proposals. She had been always at the top of Fortune's ladder, and was extremely anxious to maintain her position, by securing, in her interests, the person who, very shortly, was to be master of the world. Caligula promised to marry her as soon as he was in possession of the sovereign authority, if she would make use of her power with Tiberius in his favour, and prevail upon Macro to do the same; and, to convince her of his sincerity, he added to his protestations a promise in writing, signed by his own hand, and confirmed it with such oaths as were capable of overcoming the most obstinate credulity; but it afterwards cost him no more trouble to forget than it had done to make them.

These artifices of Gaius had their desired effect. Ennia,¹ dazzled by the lustre of the throne, was not able to resist these seductive and flattering hopes, though she had not better security for them than the promise of afterwards very influential, so that from Constantine's time they were reckoned the first officers of the Empire. The prætorian soldiers had better pay than the other troops.

¹ Sueton. vit. Cai.

the basest and most dissembling of princes, whose affection she endeavoured to purchase beforehand,¹ by granting him all the favours in her power, and shamefully prostituting herself to him, whose pretended love was only a masterpiece of policy, foolishly believing that Caligula would keep his word with her, and that, when he came to the throne, he would strictly carry out what he had promised when he stood in need of her assistance. The most scandalous thing in this infamous business was, that Macro, who was intoxicated with his power and influence (the diminution of which by the approaching change of government he dreaded above all things), was himself the chief instrument in assisting Caligula to corrupt his wife; for he imagined that he could not but be always dear to a prince who was under such obligations to him, and, consequently, that he ought to stick at nothing to humour him. Fatal blindness of the man that is devoured by ambition, who is not ashamed to bring upon himself a real and present disgrace for a bare prospect of future grandeur, though his hopes are uncertain and deceitful! The interested solicitations of this flattering courtier betrayed his designs, and were too easily seen through to escape the penetration of Tiberius, who was not readily imposed upon, and who was resolved to show that he had found out the design. One day the artful Macro, having cunningly turned the discourse upon Gaius, whom he praised excessively, the Emperor interrupted him,² and told him coldly that he perceived he was turning his back on the setting, and his face to the rising sun.

Caligula, however, recompensed very ill the substantial

¹ Tacit.

² Tacit. Ann. 6. cap. 46. Dio. lib. 58.

favours conferred upon him by Macro, who, besides,¹ was very useful to him in governing the Empire; for, not remembering that he was indebted to Macro and his wife for it, he never omitted an opportunity of using them ill. Hatred and ingratitude soon took the place of his pretended friendship,² for he sacrificéd them both to his brutal fury. A melancholy instance of the little dependence one ought to place on the favours of princes that have been purchased by wickedness!

Tiberius, having, by his death, set Caligula at liberty, delivered him from the insupportable yoke of subjection and dependence.³ It may be said that he mounted the throne amidst universal approbation, for everybody offered up their vows for his prosperity. The Senate, the legions, and the people, gave evident tokens of the joy they felt at his elevation. The people conceived the highest satisfaction at seeing on the throne the son of Germanicus, whose memory was so dear to them, and whose virtue seemed to revive in this young Prince. The legions had desired nothing so ardently as the pleasure of obeying an Emperor who was born among them, and who had passed his youth in the camp and army. The Senate that had been so humbled by Tiberius and so terrified by his repeated acts of tyranny, who were almost continually in deep mourning for the death of some of their most illustrious members (sacrificed to his jealousy and cruelty), hoped to find in the young Gaius a wise and mild Emperor. They therefore, to show the extraordinary joy and satisfaction he caused them, unanimously decreed him the Empire absolutely, without a partner,

¹ Philo. Leg. ad Cai.

² Sueton. vit. Cai.

³ Aurel. Victor. Epitom. in Calig. Philo. Leg. ad Cai.

contrary to Tiberius's will, who had ordered that his grandson should be joined with him in the government. In short, as the first beginnings of liberty always seem sweet after a reign of slavery, everybody hoped to find,¹ under this young Prince, a happy change in his fortune, and each promised himself some advantage or other, so that the day of his elevation was called Rome's second birth.

Caligula, at first, justified the high opinion that everyone had of him by a few pretended shows of virtue and justice. He paid very punctually the legacies of Tiberius and Livia; and to their bounties he added some of his own. He caused the documents² which he found, incriminating those who had persecuted his mother and his family, to be publicly burnt, to show that he was ready to sacrifice his own private resentment to the good of the public, and even of his enemies. He punished the misbehaviour of the governors of provinces, among whom was Pontius Pilate,³ procurator of Judæa, who, being convicted of bribery, extortion, and other crimes, was banished to Vienne,⁴ where he became his own executioner, and killed himself in despair.⁵ Caligula also drove out of Rome those corrupt and effeminate wretches who had been instruments of Tiberius's monstrous abominations. He degraded as many of the knights as had dishonoured their dignity by any notorious crime. Lastly, he set at liberty all those who had been imprisoned by the cruelty of his predecessor, and, in addition, made some of them very considerable presents.

¹ Sueton. vit. Calig. c. 16.

² Dio. lib. 59.

³ Luc. 3.

⁴ Colonia Julia Vienna, Vienna Allobrogum. Not the capital of Austria.

⁵ Niceph. Callist. lib. 1. c. 1. 16.

The happy beginnings of the new reign buried in oblivion all the horrors of the last; and there seemed to be little doubt but that an Emperor, who, in his youth, could give such tokens of solid wisdom, would be a pattern of consummate prudence, as soon as he should have attained to a riper age. All the actions of Caligula proclaimed his merit and eminent virtues, and increased the high idea that everyone had formed of the new government. But these serene days were soon changed into frightful storms, for they were not the natural effects of real goodness, but a wicked and malicious disguise that he had put on, the better to deceive mankind and to establish himself upon the throne, upon which he was no sooner firmly seated than he threw off the mask. By degrees he showed himself in his true colours; and, at last, weary of this restraint, he gave himself up entirely to those passions that had long been curbed and checked by a tedious and distasteful dissimulation. They broke loose like an impetuous torrent ¹ that had undermined its banks, and bore down all before them. He showed himself such as he really was,² that is to say, cruel, wicked, and furious—the tyrant,³ and not the father of the Republic. In short, he verified the prediction of the late Emperor concerning him, who discovered enough of his natural temper, notwithstanding his childhood and the thick cloud of dissimulation in which he wrapped himself. Tiberius said, that in Gaius he was nourishing a serpent for the Republic,⁴ and a Phæthon for all the earth.

Gaius Caligula verified this prophecy. The death of Tiberius broke the bonds that held in check his depraved

¹ Sueton. vit. Cai.

² Dio. lib. 59.

³ Aurel. Vict. in Epit. in Calig.

⁴ Sueton. vit. Cai.

inclinations, which were as shameful as they were violent; so that this Prince, though but a youth, was thoroughly acquainted with all those vices, which one would imagine required a long life of iniquity for a man to have made himself so perfect a master of. After having debauched his sisters by horrible incest, he exposed them to be treated after the same manner by other young men as wicked as himself, and afterwards confined them in islands for having committed the very crimes that he had compelled them to commit; telling them, with a brutal and threatening air, that he had, not only islands, but knives. He forced his sister Drusilla from her husband, Cassius Longinus (a person of high rank, who had been consul, and to whom she was lately married), and kept her publicly in his house as his wife, showing such a furious passion for her, that, when she died, he ran into the most shameful and ridiculous extravagances, by way of demonstrating his grief. In short, he was guilty of the greatest of all brutalities, and what was the most unnatural thing that can be conceived—he debauched a daughter he had by one of his sisters ¹ before he became Emperor.

These infamous practices were not confined to his own house. There was hardly an illustrious family in Rome, nor any lady of quality in the city, whom he did not dishonour; this he generally chose should take place before their own husbands, who were obliged to be witnesses of their misfortune,² after which he added the most provoking insults and affronts he could think of.³

He scandalously maintained in his house the courtesan Pyrallis, who was the most famous concubine of her time. At last, after having glutted all his detestable appetites

¹ Eutrop. in Cai. Calig.

² Sueton. vit. Cai. 36.

³ Dio. lib. 59.

in ordinary vices, he prostituted his own person by a brutality that would scarce be credible, if there had been anything too bad for him to be capable of. He had practised all sorts of crimes from his cradle, and set out, as we have observed, with abusing, most abominably, his own sisters.

LIVIA ORESTILLA

WIFE OF CALIGULA



CALIGULA'S passion for his sister Drusilla had been so violent, that it was supposed he would have been incapable of engaging in any new amour; but he, who, by the natural levity of his temper, was extremely given to change, could not remain long in the same mind. Livia Orestilla was the person who innocently inspired him with a new passion. She belonged to one of the most ancient and most illustrious families of Rome; and Calpurnius Piso, to whom she had lately been betrothed, set no less value on her birth than on her beauty. This nobleman, who was of the highest rank¹ and immensely rich, was resolved to celebrate his nuptials by a magnificent entertainment, to which all the people of distinction were invited. The bridegroom, in order to make it still more grand and pompous, entreated the Emperor to honour him with his presence, for which he paid very dearly, for it cost him no less than his quiet and his liberty.

Orestilla was very young, and very beautiful, the Emperor very susceptible of love, and possessed of absolute power; it is often dangerous to be too courteous

¹ Dio. lib. 59. Sueton. vit. Cai.

to guests of that kind. Everything was carried out on a most lavish scale; nor were the most delicate meats, wines, and the richest furniture wanting, to gratify the sight and taste even of those who were the most difficult to please. Orestilla, the chief ornament of the assembly, appeared in all her charms, which were set off to the utmost with jewels, rich clothes, and everything that was rare and costly. All this could not fail to make the greatest impression on the Emperor, nor was it at all improbable that Orestilla entertained some design of that nature; for that flattering superiority of power, which raises one so much above other people, is so extremely tempting, that few have moderation and humility enough to resist it. Be that as it may, the mirth and pleasure of the banquet concluded in a way very mortifying for Piso, the more so because he was far from expecting any such thing; for he little imagined that the bride was to fall to the share of another person, after he had been at all the expense of the wedding. Caligula, whilst at table, fell in love with Orestilla, and not being overburdened with the gift of self-denial, carried her off without any ceremony, conducted her to the palace, and married her;¹ he afterwards confirmed the marriage by an edict, declaring that he had married Orestilla, though the wife of another man, after the example of Romulus and Augustus. But he was not so constant as either of those two princes, for he soon after put her away; so true is it that the most violent passions are the easiest extinguished, and that love, which is so sudden, often ends the same way. But what was most of all unjust in Gaius was, that,

¹ Dio. lib. 59.

after he had divorced Orestilla, he would not suffer Piso to have her;¹ and, suspecting that they might see each other, notwithstanding the prohibition, he banished them both to separate islands.

¹ Sueton. lib. Cal.

LOLLIA PAULINA

SECOND WIFE OF CALIGULA



LOLLIA PAULINA was not happier than her predecessor. She was granddaughter of Marcus Lollius, remarkable for nothing¹ but possessing in perfection the art of concealing the worst vices under the appearance of modesty and wisdom. In fact, he disguised himself so well, that, keen-sighted as Augustus was, he was deceived by him, and took the mask of virtue for virtue itself, which he thought he was rewarding, when he honoured Lollius with the highest offices; for he made him governor of Galatia, with the rank of proconsul, when that kingdom, after the death of Amyntas, was reduced to a province. He afterwards made him consul, and gave him the command of the armies in several expeditions, in which he was not always successful; and at last, in order to show him the highest mark of his esteem, he entrusted him with the guardianship of his grandson, Gaius Cæsar, when he sent him into the East;² in which honourable employment Lollius acquitted himself very ill, for he gave the young prince very bad advice,³ and, by false reports and fabrications, inspired him with an implacable

¹ Vell. Paterc. Histor. lib. 2.

² Dio. lib. 59.

³ Tacit. Ann. 3. c. 48.

hatred against Tiberius.¹ He also frustrated, by his underhand practices,² whatever conquests Gaius might have made, thus basely betraying the trust that was reposed in him, to satisfy his insatiable avarice, though a great poet has been pleased, in one of his flattering odes, to praise his disinterestedness.³ For Phraates, King of the Parthians, at an interview which he had with the young prince Gaius Cæsar, on one of the islands of the Euphrates, discovered to him the infidelity of Lollius, his governor, who, being dazzled with the gold of those Oriental kings, and, not being able to resist their presents, sold them the secrets that had been communicated to him, and informed them of everything that had been resolved upon in the Roman council. This base and unworthy behaviour obliged Gaius to deprive him of his confidence and friendship. Lollius, finding his reputation ruined, and not being able to say anything in his own justification, poisoned himself, that he might not survive his disgrace. Such is generally the miserable end of traitors. They meet, sooner or later, with the punishment due to their perfidiousness, either in a violent death, or in dragging on a wretched life loaded with shame and infamy, hated by those whom they have betrayed, and despised by those to whom they have sold their honour and probity.

Lollia had all the advantages that could be desired. Her birth was illustrious, her beauty remarkable, and her character very high. To all these good qualities were added immense riches,⁴ which furnished her with the means of making a very considerable figure at Rome.

¹ Vell. Paterc. Histor. lib. 2.

² Sueton. vit. Tib.

³ Horat. Od. 4. 9.

⁴ Plin. lib. 9. c. 35.

She was even remarkable for making a good use of that wealth, which had been the fruit of her father's horrid extortions and treasons.

Memmius Regulus, consul and governor of Macedonia and Achaia, married her, and soon after took her with him to his government. Their unlucky stars, or rather the brutality of Caligula, in a little time brought them back to Rome.¹ The Emperor, having one day heard it said that Lollia's grandmother had been a lady of extraordinary beauty, was seized with a great desire² to see the grand-daughter of so remarkable a person. He did not long hesitate whether he should gratify his curiosity or not. Memmius, who was then at the head of the army, had orders to hasten as soon as possible to Court, together with Lollia Paulina, his wife.

She no sooner made her appearance, than Caligula was deeply in love, and, being hurried on by his furious passion, obliged Memmius to yield her to him. He even compelled him to act the part of her father upon this occasion, and to give her away. He then married her with all the usual formalities, much in the same manner as Augustus had married Livia.

Lollia was very sensible of the advantages that this great change of fortune afforded her, and was, no doubt, rejoiced to have her vanity thus gratified; but her satisfaction was of as short continuance as the Emperor's passion, for Caligula (as ready to hate as he was to love) was soon as much disgusted with this lady as he had been with the others, so that, with all her beauty and rich apparel, she was not capable of fixing the heart of this fickle and capricious prince,³ who divorced her with-

¹ Sueton. vit. Cai.

² Dio. lib. 58.

³ Dio. Sueton. vit. Cai.

out giving any reason for it, and very coldly sent her away, strictly charging her never to marry anyone else.

Lollia Paulina, who had been with so much rapidity exalted to the sovereign power, was as suddenly reduced to her former condition, and became an example of the instability of Fortune, and how little it is to be reckoned upon. She supported it, however, with a great deal of firmness and resolution, comforting herself with her riches. She partook of all amusements, but was very careful of her conduct, so as to give no room for censure. She shone at all assemblies,¹ as well by her captivating beauty, as by the pearls, rubies, and most valuable diamonds, with which she might be said to be rather covered than adorned, for which she was not indebted to the generosity of Caligula, but to Lollius, who had accumulated all this wealth by the plunder of whole provinces.

She lived in this manner during the rest of Caligula's reign and the beginning of Claudius's; but, after Messalina's death, Paulina, who had by no means lost her taste for power and authority, began to conceive hopes of remounting that throne, which she had lost by the inconstancy of Gaius. She might reasonably have aspired to this exalted degree of honour, if there had not been a great many competitors; but the throne has too many charms not to make more than one person sigh for it.² Every lady of beauty and distinction at Rome flattered herself with having as good pretensions to the sovereignty as Paulina; but there were two especially who disputed with her the heart of Cæsar. Ælia Pætina and Agrippina were these two dangerous rivals. These ladies, as

¹ Plin. lib. 9. c. 35.

² Tacit. Ann. 12. c. 1.

may well be imagined, made the most of their beauty, and neglected nothing that could possibly set themselves off to advantage. They had almost an equal degree of favour and interest, being each of them supported by one of the three favourites who governed the Emperor. Claudius, the most stupid and irresolute of men, hesitated a great while before he could come to any resolution; and, before he determined, was resolved to know the opinions of Pallas, Callistus, and Narcissus, his three masters; for Claudius had vested the sovereign authority and entire government of the Empire in the hands of these unworthy wretches, who ruled the world according to their own humour and caprice.

Narcissus proposed *Ælia Pætina*, who had already been married to Claudius and divorced without any crime being imputed to her. Callistus, who supported Lollia's interests, represented to the Emperor that, though it was true that *Pætina* had been divorced without any reason, it would be dangerous to expose himself and his children to her vengeance, since she was full of resentment for the affront that had been put upon her, and that she would never be other than a cruel step-mother to his children; that his marrying her a second time would make her only more haughty and imperious; that nothing of all this was to be feared from Lollia, who was remarkable for her illustrious birth, and for her beauty, in which respect but few could be compared to her, and for such a reputation, as was proof against the utmost that malice could invent. He added, that the particular interest of Britannicus and Octavia (who were Claudius's children by his wife Messalina) required Lollia in preference to any other, because, as she had

never had children, she would look upon her husband's as her own.

Pallas, speaking on behalf of Agrippina (to whose interests he was particularly attached, for reasons that were far from being innocent), proclaimed aloud her extraordinary qualifications, and laid great stress upon the nobility of her birth; for she was descended from the family of the Claudians, just as the Emperor was. He extolled to the skies her beauty and merit; and Agrippina herself had the art of fortifying his reasons in such a manner, by her cunning and bewitching caresses, which were not at all consistent with modesty, that Claudius decided in her favour by a false and ill-judged decision, of which he had very soon reason to repent.

This choice confounded all the hopes of Paulina, who now saw her pretensions vanish, and all her ambitious projects come to nothing; but that was not her only misfortune, for the revengeful spirit and jealousy of Agrippina were the occasion of others, which were fatal to her.¹ This princess, who had extremely dreaded the power of her rivals, conceived an implacable hatred towards Paulina, and resolved to punish her assurance in asking to marry the Emperor, which she looked upon as an attack upon her rights. She thought proper, indeed, to conceal her resentment for some time, but as soon as she had secured her fortune, she indulged her rage to the utmost.

The speediest and most cruel effects of her fury fell upon Lollia, because her beauty was the most formidable. Agrippina, whilst her power was but yet in its infancy, did not care to proceed in a violent manner, and would

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12. cap. 22.

not venture to put Lollia to death without some pretence, which it was no easy matter to find, because the conduct of this lady had always been such as gave her enemies no handle against her; but the Empress, not being longer able to deny herself the satisfaction of sacrificing this victim to her malice, suborned someone, who accused her to Claudius of the crime of superstition.

In order to render it more plausible, the charge was embellished with many specious circumstances, which were artfully invented. She was reproached with having ¹ given credit to the predictions of the Chaldæans, and said to have sacrilegiously searched into the dark secrets of futurity, to discover whether the Emperor's marriage would be fortunate or not, and to have consulted the oracles of the gods, to satisfy this criminal curiosity. All these charges were very grave, but they were all false, and it would have been very easy for Lollia to have shown the contrary (for they were supported by no proofs), if she had been permitted to justify herself. But care was taken that she should have no such opportunity. That would have brought too much confusion upon the authors of this calumny, and the innocence of the accused could not have been proved without publishing the infernal malice of the accuser.

As soon as this accusation had been trumped up against Lollia, the Emperor proceeded to inform the Senate of it. At first he spoke very highly of Lollia, mentioning her great nobility, and how much she was to be respected for being the daughter of Lucius Volusius, and niece of Cotta Messalinus. He spoke of her marriage with Memmius, who was illustrious by his high offices, but was maliciously

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12. c. 22.

silent as to her having been the wife of Caligula, for fear that it would put them in mind of the manner in which he was treating the wife of an Emperor, who ought not to be put on a level with ordinary people. At last, after having tried the Senate with a very tedious discourse, he told them that Lollia had thought fit to disturb the State with her dark practices, and, that it might not be in her power to put her mischievous projects into execution, he sacrificed her to the public weal, and immediately banished her from all parts of Italy, and confiscated her estate, leaving her but a very small portion of her immense riches.

This unjust exile, one would think, was a punishment severe enough for an imaginary crime, and one that ought to have satisfied Agrippina; but it seldom happens that malicious people can prevail on themselves to set bounds to their revenge, when they have in their hands the power to gratify that diabolical passion. Agrippina mortally hated Lollia, and it was not possible that the fire of her implacable wrath could be extinguished by anything less than the blood of her enemy. A tribune was at once despatched to the place of her banishment, with orders to put her to death; and it is very probable that the Empress took care to chose a proper person to perform this infamous commission. She was not deceived in her choice, for this unjust order was executed with the same cruelty with which it had been given; and Lollia expiated by her death the unpardonable crime of having endeavoured to marry Claudius. Agrippina's vengeance was not yet entirely glutted; she was determined to carry it beyond the death of her rival, and therefore commanded her head to be brought to her, in order to feast her eyes upon

so agreeable a spectacle. She enjoyed this poor satisfaction,¹ for the head was brought to Rome. She contemplated and examined it very narrowly; and, being afraid that some other head might have been brought instead of Lollia's, she had ² the cruel curiosity to convince herself of the truth, by brutally opening her mouth, which she did with her own hands, to see by her teeth, which it seems had some peculiar formation, whether it was really the head of Lollia.

¹ Dio. lib. 60.

² Xiphilin. in Claud.

CÆSONIA

THE LAST WIFE OF CALIGULA



AFTER Caligula had divorced Lollia, as has been related, Cæsonia made her appearance.¹ She was the daughter of Orfitus and Vestilla. When Gaius espoused her, Cæsonia was married to another man² who had three daughters by her. She possessed neither the beauty nor the prudence of Gaius's other wives,³ notwithstanding which he loved her the best, and was always faithful to her. He could not possibly have made a choice more worthy of himself, nor selected one who would enter more cordially into all his ways and humours. She was impudent, bold, and haughty to the last degree.⁴ Her lewdness and cruelty were equal to his, and she contributed not a little to those tragical executions that filled Rome with blood and tears during the reign of this tyrant.

The Emperor had loved her long before he married her; and it is reported she employed other arts besides her beauty to gain his affections; for we read that she prepared him a potion (of the ingredients of which a poet pretends to give us an account⁵), which, having had

¹ Sueton. vit. Cai.

² Plin. lib. 9. c. 7.

³ Dio. lib. 59. Suet. in Cai. cap. 25.

⁴ Joseph. Ant. Judaic. lib. 20.

⁵ Juvenal. Sat. 6. 610.

a greater effect than she intended, disturbed his brain, and was the occasion of that fury which made him commit so many extravagances and cruelties.

Caligula, being quite mad with love for his Cæsonia, dressed her up sometimes like a soldier, showed her to the troops in this dress, forced her to ride on horseback by his side, and often exposed her quite naked to his friends, telling them that, by speaking a single word, he could make that pretty head of hers leap from her shoulders, with which polite compliment he generally concluded his brutal caresses.

His passion for her increased after the birth of a daughter he had by her. He was so overjoyed to see himself a father, that he committed a thousand ridiculous extravagances. He then, in the most formal and solemn manner, declared himself husband of Cæsonia, and father to the young princess. She was called Julia Drusilla, and the mother was honoured with the title of August. He obliged everybody to make him presents upon this occasion,¹ and most basely received the money that was brought him from all parts for the maintenance of the child. He had her carried into the temple of all the goddesses, and placed in the arms of Minerva, to whom he entrusted her education, asserting that Jupiter and he were equally fathers of Drusilla, and that he left the people to judge which she would have most reason to be proud of. It is certain that nobody had the least reason to doubt whether Caligula was her father or not. The signs of cruelty which soon appeared in this girl were a sufficient proof of it. Never was there seen so ill-disposed a child; a devilish sort of malice was soon per-

¹ Josephus. Suetonius. Dio.

ceived in her, and such an inclination to cruelty, that it was dangerous to let any children come near her; so much did she delight in scratching them, pulling out their eyes, and doing them all the mischief in her power.

As everybody knew that Caligula's love was nothing but caprice, and finished as brutally as it began, it was expected that his inclination for Cæsonia would soon give place to some other passion, and that he would get rid of her as he had done of her predecessors. But he was always constant to her, which made it generally believed that she had given him love potions; for he carried his love so far that he was not able to live a moment without her.¹ He gave her leave to distribute as she pleased the spoils of the Germans, whom Galba had defeated. He frequently spoke himself of the violent love he had for her, declaring that he was surprised at it; and in some of his fits of passion he was heard to say, that, rather than not draw the secret from her, he was determined to put her to the torture.

If Gaius's unaccountable passion for Cæsonia made it generally believed that he was out of his mind, nobody could have the least doubt of it, when they saw him commit such other follies, that the historians, who give us an account of them, would scarce be believed, if it was not well known that men are capable of all that is bad, when the Almighty abandons and leaves them to themselves. For, not content with being superior to the rest of mankind, he was resolved that nothing in heaven or earth should be above him; therefore he insolently determined to make himself a god, though guilty of actions that savoured less of the man than of the devil. This

¹Pers. Sat. 6. 47.

foolish and wicked fancy gave the finishing stroke to his senses, and quite put an end to the little reason he had left. He commanded that he should be respected as a divinity, that everybody should prostrate themselves before him, and pay him adoration. Nor had he much difficulty in obtaining that from a people as much given to flattery as he himself was to pride and vanity. He often amused himself with sitting in the temples among the statues of the gods, and receiving the homage that was paid to him with the same deference as to the gods themselves; which impiety was no less dishonourable in the infamous courtiers who paid it him, than it was in him who required it. Sometimes he appeared with the ornaments belonging to the gods of fable; with wings, for example, on his feet and the wand in his hand, like Mercury; at other times, with a crown like the rays of the Sun, in imitation of Apollo; and often with a sword and buckler, like Mars. He frequently affected to whisper to the statue of Jupiter, and then pretended to listen to it, as if the god had been speaking to him, to show that the gods themselves looked upon him as their equal.

This mad and unaccountable pride inspired him with a violent desire to have his statue placed in the Temple of Jerusalem. He imagined that it would greatly contribute to his deification, and, knowing that the Jews would by no means suffer any image in their temple, he decided to use stratagem, and then to employ his authority to the utmost, but neither the one nor the other succeeded; he always met with in the Jews a resistance, which zeal for their religion rendered so invincibly obstinate, that neither threats nor promises could prevail upon them to admit of a novelty so monstrous, and so contrary to their

law. All these difficulties did not discourage him: but, still persisting in the resolution of being a god, he called Jupiter his brother, and invited the Moon, when it was at the full, to come and lie with him, declaring that she was his wife. Sometimes he would threaten Jupiter, saying, "Either kill me, or I will kill thee." At last, being persuaded that he was a god, he caused a magnificent temple to be built in honour of himself, in which the victims that were offered up to him consisted of the most rare and costly birds. Priests were instituted to him on purpose, amongst whom Cæsonia was consecrated a priestess. He was resolved to increase the number of them, and, by the most ridiculous imagination in the world, he caused his horse Incitatus to be also made a priest; a worthy pontiff to such a divinity! This, however, was not the only honour that he conferred upon him; he often invited him to supper, and commanded his oats to be given him in a golden manger. He fitted up a house for him with the richest furniture, and appointed officers of his household, assigning him revenues where-withal to entertain splendidly the guests that should be invited to eat at his house; and, that his Incitatus might pass through all the grades of office,¹ he determined to make him consul, degrading, by this contempt, the highest dignity of the Empire.

His cruelty carried him to excesses so great and barbarous, that Tiberius, in comparison with him, might pass for a mild and merciful prince. After having put to death Macro and Ennia, his wife, by way of recompense for having procured him the Empire, he sacrificed to his brutal fury Silanus, whose daughter he had married in

¹ Sueton. vit. Cal.

Tiberius's reign, and so, by an almost unprecedented inhumanity, he became the butcher of his father-in-law. He compelled fathers to be present and look upon the execution of their children, without permitting them to shut their eyes, that they might be spared so dismal a spectacle; and, as if he took a particular pleasure in violating the laws of nature, when one of those miserable fathers, who had been ordered to see his son put to death, excused himself on account of an indisposition, the tyrant had the cruelty to send him a litter.

The greatest potentates were as liable to the effects of his fury as the meanest people. Ptolemy, son of King Juba, and cousin-german to his father, Germanicus, was most cruelly and unjustly murdered. Mithridates, King of Armenia, was thought to be very fortunate, when Caligula contented himself with only condemning him to a rigorous banishment. All those who had been exiled were put out of their pain by being speedily executed, because, when the Emperor happened by chance to ask one of the persons that had been long banished and recalled at the beginning of his reign, how he had employed his time during his exile, the other imprudently answered, that he had continually prayed for the death of Tiberius and the accession of Caligula. Gaius immediately took it for granted that all those whom he had sent into banishment were of the same mind, and wished for *his* death; upon which ridiculous notion, he commanded them all to be massacred. Cannius, the philosopher, was so bold as to speak to the Emperor with a little more liberty than ordinary, for which he was ordered to prepare for death, and was accordingly put to the sword; for Caligula was never known to break his word upon such occasions.

The centurion, who came to conduct him to his execution, found him playing at chess, with all the calmness imaginable, and such as was worthy of his profession.

We should never have done, if we were to go into the particulars of his cruelties, which filled Rome with murders. But, though they were monstrous of their kind, and infinite in number, they could not satisfy his insatiable thirst after blood. He was frequently heard to say that he wished the Roman people had but one head, that he might have the pleasure of destroying them at one stroke. As to his abominable lewdness, it is not to be read or mentioned without horror, but what else could be expected from a prince that was born with the most vicious and depraved appetites? We can only add that a government, exercised with such insupportable insolence and barbarity, could not but give occasion to innumerable discontents and murmurings; nor were there wanting people enough who were resolved, at all hazards, to get rid of this monster, who was abandoned by those gods, whom he pretended to equal, and detested by all mankind, whom he ruled with tyranny and oppression. Many conspiracies were formed against him, which, being either premature or ill-concerted, were discovered, and expiated by the death of their authors; but Cassius Chœrea and Cornelius Sabinus conducted theirs with so much cunning and secrecy, that Caligula received at their hands the just reward of his wickedness.

The news of his assassination filled Rome with joy, but people were apprehensive that it might not be true. To put the matter beyond all doubt, the centurion Lupus hastened to the palace, where he found Cæsonia and the princess Drusilla, her daughter, weeping over the bleed-

ing corpse of Caligula. Cæsonia showed the excess of her grief by abundant sighs and tears, and by deploring the misfortune of her husband; she bitterly lamented his obstinacy in not taking the advice which she said she had often given him.

These words were variously interpreted. Some imagined ¹ that she had advised the Emperor to shed no more blood, but to affect, at least, some sentiments of humanity for the future. Others, on the contrary, were of opinion that ² she had got some intelligence of the plot, and had told the Emperor that there was no way of preventing its consequences, but by putting all the conspirators to death. Be that as it may, on Lupus ³ making his appearance before Cæsonia, bathed in tears, she entreated him to come near and assist her in paying the last duty to the Emperor's body. But, being conscious at the same time that Lupus was come with another design, she at once altered her tone, and, putting on a firm and bold countenance, prepared herself for death, entreating him to deprive her of a life that was already odious to her. Lupus, who came with no other intention, did not keep her long in pain. He ran her through the body with his sword; and afterwards seizing the young princess, dashed out her brains against the wall, with a barbarity that agreed very well with his name.

¹ Joseph. Antiq. Judaic. lib. 19.

² Sueton. vit. Calig.

³ Dio. lib. 59.

VALERIA MESSALINA

WIFE OF CLAUDIUS



HERE are vices as well as virtues that seem hereditary in families; and the bad examples of parents have sometimes a sort of contagious effect upon their children. A lady, whose works have been much admired by the public, has very justly observed that a coquetish mother seldom has daughters who are remarkable for their virtue. Valeria Messalina is an unfortunate example that sufficiently justifies the truth of this maxim. She was the daughter of a vicious woman, whom she not only imitated, but surpassed in all manner of debaucheries. Her whole life was one continued series of crimes and most shameful impurities. Her prostitutions were infamous, public, and detestable. The most brutal pleasures were what she most delighted in, and the most horrible vices showed themselves to her under the most charming and delightful forms. Virtue was the only object she looked upon with horror, and her reputation was the thing in the world she set the least value upon. She forgot her dignity, her birth, and the natural modesty of her sex, as well as the fidelity she owed her husband, in order to abandon herself to brutal passions, without the least regard to decency, without fearing to

incur the punishment of such of her predecessors as had pursued the like courses, without dreading either the censure of the world, or the anger of Claudius the Emperor. Never was seen such an utter contempt for shame and modesty as in her.

She was the daughter of Valerius Messala Barbatus and of Lepida, who was accused of magic as well as prostitutions, and of having had incestuous intercourse with Ahenobarbus, her brother. From this impure source sprang Messalina, who was married to her cousin Claudius, who had had four wives before, namely, *Æmilia Lepida*, whom he divorced without cohabiting with her: *Livia Medullina*, who died the very day of her marriage: *Plautina*, by whom he had *Drusus*, who, a few days after his betrothal to the daughter of *Sejanus*, was choked by an accident; for, as he was amusing himself with tossing up a pear and catching it in his mouth, it got so far down his throat, that he died before any relief could be had; he had, besides *Drusus*, a daughter called *Claudia*, whom he exposed quite naked before her mother's door, upon a well-grounded suspicion that he was not her father: for much the same reason, he put away *Plautina*, in order to marry *Ælia Pætina* by whom he had *Antonia*; her he also divorced, that he might marry *Messalina*, his relation, who was by much the worst of them all. He was then only a private person; he had by her a daughter called *Octavia*, afterwards married to *Nero*, and a son called *Britannicus*, who was born on the twentieth day of his reign.

Messalina had naturally such a violent passion for gallantry, that it was a very difficult matter for her to keep within the narrow bounds of marriage. She had

beauty enough to procure gallants, and too little virtue to let them suffer long; so that she was guilty of innumerable transgressions of that sort, besides cruelty and avarice, to which she was as much inclined. Her power was equally fatal to all that were chaste and rich. The depravation and corruption of her heart excited the one, and her insatiable love of money caused her to practise all manner of cruelty against the possessors of it in order to gratify the other. Debauchery and avarice were, then, the two centres round which all the desires and actions of this Empress turned. It is hard to conceive the miserable conditions of an Empire that is governed by a woman, who has nothing at heart but the gratification of her appetites, whose violence, meeting with no resistance, spreads their indiscriminately fatal influence upon all those whom her caprice inclines her to persecute. For Messalina could not have carried her impudence and tyranny to such lengths, if they had been opposed at first; but, her crimes being in a manner permitted, she was encouraged to go on in the same course. So true it is, that there is nothing so bad but a wicked heart is capable of it, when suffered to proceed without control.

Claudius was made Emperor in a tumultuous manner by a body of soldiers, who thought proper, of their own authority, to advance him to the throne. He was seized with a panic at the sight of this confused multitude, which he imagined was come to kill him. He was heavy and stupid, too thoughtless to mind his wife's conduct, and too timid to punish her irregularities; of an easy, indolent temper, and entirely taken up with the pleasures

of the table and gaming,¹ never troubling his head about his domestic affairs nor those of the Empire, which seemed to him an insupportable burden, and which he chose rather to lay upon his freedmen, a gang of base, artful, and self-interested wretches, to whom he entirely abandoned himself, and who, having infinitely more at heart their own private advantage than the honour of their master, made him do whatever they pleased, in such a manner that Claudius was less their sovereign than their slave.

This stupid indolence was the occasion of all Messalina's debaucheries. From hence proceeded all those horrible prostitutions and tyrannical cruelties, that made her so formidable to those who were rich or virtuous. At first she pretended to keep within certain bounds, and to be a little secret in her amours; but finding that nobody offered the least opposition, and that she might undertake everything without fear or reserve, she shook off shame and constraint, and indulged to the utmost her

¹ Gluttony was Claudius's predominant passion. He gave, almost every day, sumptuous entertainments in public, to which a vast number of guests were invited, frequently six hundred at a time. A story is told of Titus Vinus, of very noble family, who being one day invited to dine with the Emperor, got an opportunity of stealing a gold cup from the sideboard. Claudius was informed of this, and being resolved to mortify him for the theft, invited him to dinner again the next day with the same company, but gave orders that only earthenware vessels should be put near Vinus. This insulting distinction was taken notice of by all the guests, who were informed of the affair, upon which a great laugh was set up at poor Vinus's expense, and all eyes were fixed upon him. This was a greater mortification than any corporal punishment. It is reported that Claudius was so fond of lengthening out these entertainments, that, for fear any of his guests should be injured by the restraint they might be under in his presence, he resolved to publish an edict, by which everybody was permitted to break wind at table, having been informed that one of those who had been invited and had been detained a great while at table had been made very ill by not having that liberty.

infamous passions, which by degrees became quite familiar to her. This miserable habit rendered her mind impervious to all the reasons that might have persuaded her to observe some rules of decency; she therefore plunged into the most scandalous behaviour, which she carried to such a degree,¹ that the historians who have transmitted these facts to us own that posterity will hardly ever be brought to believe them.

She began her cruelties by the murder of the princess Julia, daughter of Germanicus and wife of Vinicius.² This lady, together with her sister Agrippina, had been banished to the island of Pontia by order of their brother Caligula, who deprived them of their liberty after having robbed them of their honour.

Claudius, their uncle, being touched by their misfortune, recalled them from exile, and restored to them their estates and all their former splendour. These illustrious persons appeared again at Court, where they held the rank that was due to their birth, their beauty, and their merit. The Emperor seemed to have a great regard for Julia, and it was observed that he did not dislike to be alone with her, and that they passed a considerable share of their time together. Messalina took these marks of the Emperor's complaisance for love, and was forthwith alarmed at it.³ Claudius was weak and fickle; Julia handsome, and perhaps ambitious, and her charms were powerful enough to inspire the Emperor with an inclination to marry her. Messalina was apprehensive of this, and consequently looked upon Julia as her rival. She had also another reason to hate this princess. She was

¹ Tacit. Ann. II. Sueton. vit. Claud. c. 22.

² Sueton. vit. Claud.

³ Dio. lib. 60.

descended from the family of the Cæsars, and inherited a sort of noble haughtiness,¹ which would not suffer her to stoop to those base, unworthy flatteries that the Empress required (the ordinary steps by which people climb up to favour), but which she never could submit to. These were the true provocations; but the Empress did not fail to accuse her of many crimes which could not possibly be proved, for which, notwithstanding, Julia was banished; and, soon after, her life was sacrificed to Messalina's jealousy.

Seneca had also his share in the disgrace,² being accused of not having always behaved with the wisdom of a philosopher with respect to the princess Julia, upon which account Claudius banished him to the island of Corsica. Seneca (Stoic as he was³) felt very sensibly the shame and suffering of this exile, of which he preserved a bitter remembrance, which broke out into satires and invectives against Claudius, as soon as the Emperor's death had secured him from further mischief. Agrippina very narrowly escaped the same punishment as her sister. Messalina could not pardon her beauty and merit, but, on the contrary, was resolved that her death should expiate those heinous crimes; but that of Drusus's daughter seeming the more necessary of the two, she turned her thoughts entirely to that.⁴ This princess, who was called Julia, and was also niece to Claudius, had the misfortune not to be agreeable to Messalina, for which crime she was soon put to death. It was this Julia who had contracted so intimate a friendship with Pomponia Græcina, wife of Plautius, who, seeing Julia treated with so much cruelty,

¹ Sueton. vit. Claud. ² Tacit. Ann. 12. ³ Senec. Lud. in Claud.

⁴ Sueton. vit. Claud. Dio. lib. 60. Tacit. Ann. 13.

broke her heart with grief, after passing her whole life in mourning and affliction, nourishing her melancholy in solitude, far removed from all pleasures and diversions, even the most innocent. This Pomponia was a lady of very great merit. Her conduct was always so regular and unblamable, that it was generally supposed she had embraced the Christian religion,¹ which the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul had already preached at Rome. In fact, she was accused of being inclined to the new and foreign superstitions, as they called the Christian faith.

Messalina, having thus cured her jealousy by the death of her that caused it, thought of nothing but how to satisfy her appetites. All those who had virtue enough to resist her infamous pursuits soon felt the effects of her cruelty; for she made no scruple to accuse them of treason or some horrid crime, upon which they were put to death without mercy. Appius Silanus was one of the first who died a martyr to his virtue. Claudius had married him to Domitia Lepida, his mother-in-law, and honoured him with his friendship and particular esteem; it must be acknowledged he was worthy of it, as well on account of his birth as his extraordinary merit, which had procured him the honour of having for his first wife Æmilia Lepida, grand-daughter of Augustus. Silanus, who was universally esteemed, had the misfortune to be agreeable to Messalina, who, regarding nothing but her brutal passion, was not ashamed to make him advances to which he had the greatest aversion.

He represented to her that, being so nearly related to her as he was, he could not comply with her unlawful desires, without being guilty of the greatest crime; but

¹Baron. ad Ann. Ner. 3.

this had no effect upon Messalina. The most powerful considerations are of no weight, when nature and temperament are to be forced. The Empress, whose violent desires were increased by difficulties, redoubled her efforts in proportion to the resistance she met with. Silanus was victorious in this conflict, and Messalina had the mortification of having employed all her threats and promises to no purpose. This was sufficient to enrage the Empress beyond all bounds. She could not be so keenly disappointed and affronted without being full of indignation. She swore to destroy Silanus, and thereby make herself amends for the scandalous steps she had taken without success. She took care not to appear in this affair herself, but committed the management of it to Narcissus, who was entirely devoted to her, and who was full of expedients when a piece of work of that sort was in hand.

This freedman, who was become exceedingly powerful by his immense riches, which he had amassed by theft and rapine, and by being the scourge of all those that had money, whether at Rome or in the provinces, readily fell in with Messalina's design of ruining Silanus, whose virtue she had not been able to overcome; and because no crime could justly be laid to his charge, they were forced to have recourse to calumny and artifice. Narcissus came one morning very early into the Emperor's chamber, with a melancholy countenance, which he well know how to put on, and after a good deal of sighing and lamenting the evil things he had to foretell, declared to Claudius that he had dreamt he saw the traitor Silanus plunge his dagger into the Emperor's heart.

Messalina, upon this, pretended to be extremely terrified, and protested that she had frequently dreamt the

same thing of late. Claudius, who was very weak and foolish, fell at once into the snare that was laid for him. He was immediately seized with a panic, the more so because, at the very time when Messalina and Narcissus were acting their part so well,¹ a person came to inform the Emperor that Silanus was at the door. This was true, for by a diabolical stratagem, orders were sent him the night before to be at the palace early in the morning, which command Silanus was obliged to obey. Claudius no sooner heard of his being there, than (being already frightened at what had been told him) he was convinced of the truth of it, and no longer doubted of his being come to put his wicked designs into execution. Fear would not permit him to weigh and consider the matter, nor to examine whether Silanus was really guilty or not; for he ordered him to be killed that moment. This stupid prince imagined he owed his life to Narcissus, and expressed great indebtedness to him, for that he was (sleeping as well as waking) solicitous for his safety and welfare. He was not ashamed to go afterwards to the Senate, and give them a tedious account of the whole affair.

Silanus's murder served as a sad warning to all honest and good people, how precarious their lives were under this phantom of an Emperor, who served only as the instrument of which Messalina and his wretched freedmen made use; and the misfortune of Silanus gave them sufficient warning of what they were to expect. To prevent this, they determined to deprive Claudius of the throne which he filled so unworthily, and formed themselves into a conspiracy, wherein many senators and

¹ Sueton. vit. Claud.

people of distinction were concerned; and, that a person of weight and consideration might be at the head of them,¹ they chose *Furius Camillus Scribonianus*, governor of *Dalmatia*, who had a considerable army under his command. This general, flattering himself with vain hopes and expectations of nothing less than the throne, permitted the troops to salute him as Emperor, the grandeur of this high dignity concealing from him the danger to which he exposed himself.

As this hazardous affair was undertaken with precipitation, and conducted without prudence, it came to nothing.² *Camillus* and his accomplices, knowing *Claudius* to be extremely timid, contented themselves with writing him a letter, full of threats and reproaches, insolently ordering him to quit the throne which he was totally unfit for, and re-assume his private capacity. This ill-considered design was fatal to all those who were concerned in it, so that *Camillus's* joy was as short as *Claudius's* fear; for, just as he was deliberating with the Senate whether he should submit to *Camillus*, the news arrived of the conspiracy having broken up of itself, the soldiers, from religious scruples, refusing to obey their commanders, though they had taken the oath to the new Emperor; for, when they attempted to take the colours from the place where they were fixed in the ground, nobody was able to remove them. As they were very superstitious, this intimidated the legions,³ and they immediately concluded that the gods were adverse to their acknowledging the usurped authority of *Camillus*, and so they abandoned him. He immediately fled to an island, where he was

¹ *Tacit. Ann. 12.*

² *Tacit.*

³ *Dio. lib. 60. Sueton. vit. Claud. 35.*

killed in the arms of his wife Junia, and expiated his rashness by a tragical end; which may serve as a lesson to ambitious people, to teach them that reason ought to banish from their minds those false notions of grandeur, which vanity and pride are apt to encourage, and that an untimely end is generally the fate of those, whose foolish ambition leads them to rebel against the lawful authority.

In the meantime the conspirators were diligently sought after; and this plot furnished Messalina and Narcissus with an opportunity of gratifying their greed and cruelty; for, affecting an extraordinary zeal for Claudius, they filled Rome with murder and destruction, so that the town had never groaned under so cruel a scourge. Riches became fatal to all those that were possessed of them; witnesses were suborned to prove them guilty of treason, their estates were confiscated, and very often they were put to death. Nothing was heard of but horrible tortments and bloody executions, so that none were safe but the poorest class of people. All the families of distinction were reduced to the most shameful misery; for the extortions and rapines of Messalina and Narcissus were a flame that could never be extinguished but by a shower of gold. One might then see Roman knights ¹ and Senators put to the torture, notwithstanding their rank and dignity. In short, matters were come to such a pitch of misery, that great numbers preferred to kill themselves than continue to live in such a condition. Cæcina Pætus was one of that number, being encouraged thereto by the example of Arria, his wife, who, seeing him hesitate about it, plunged a poniard into her own breast before his

¹ Dio. lib. 60.

face, with such a firmness of soul, as was much admired in those days, and still makes a great noise in history.¹

Messalina, rendered more insolent by the failure of the conspiracy, and by the full liberty she had of practising her wickedness, indulged still more her vicious appetites, which were now carried to the utmost excess. Being intoxicated with her power, which was formidable to all the world, she imagined that everything ought to give way to her, so that she thought the least resistance intolerable. In the number of her paramours were Proculus, Urbicus, Trogus, Calpurnianus, captain of the guards, Rufus, the senator Vergilianus, Montanus a Roman knight, Cæsonius, and multitudes of others, whom a poet calls the rivals of gods.²

Plautius Lateranus was one of her gallants, as also the physician Valens, who prided himself much upon his eloquence. Vinicius was one of the few that did not carry his complaisance so far. He was of an illustrious family, which had given several consuls to the republic. He possessed all the qualities that were necessary to make an honest man,³ enhanced by a politeness and affability that gained him the esteem of all the world. Tiberius, who had honoured him with his alliance by marriage, also gave him many important offices; and

¹ Cæcina Pætus, a man of Consular rank, being implicated in the conspiracy of Scribonianus, was apprehended and brought to Rome, whither his wife also hastened after him, to try if it was possible to save his life; but finding that there was no probability of succeeding, she endeavoured to persuade her husband to prevent the torments that were preparing for him by a voluntary death. But perceiving that he had not the courage to deprive himself of a life which he was not, however, long to enjoy, she took a dagger and plunged it into her own bosom; then drawing it out, presented it to her husband, saying, very calmly, Pætus, it is not very painful. (*Pæte, non dolet.*)

² Juvenal. Sat. 6.

³ Dio. lib. 60. Tacit. Ann. 15.

Caligula (whose odd and capricious temper it was no easy matter to please) could never find any fault with him, so judicious and blameless had his conduct always been. Nobody but Messalina was capable of depriving the Senate of one of its most illustrious members. This Empress, who put no limits to her pleasures or desires, being hurried on by her brutal passions, made advances of gallantry to Vinicius, which were not received as she wished and expected. She found in this worthy senator that goodness which she had divested herself of. He was too virtuous to defile the bed of his Emperor, and therefore constantly resisted her attempts, and nobly despised her threats; but it cost him very dear.

A woman who has had the weakness to offer favours which have not been accepted, is extremely to be feared. She is capable of all the cruelties with which the desire of vengeance can inspire her. As she cannot bear the sight of the man to whom she would have prostituted her honour and her person, she thinks of nothing so much as of ruining one who she imagines eternally reproaches her with her infamous behaviour. Both sacred and profane history furnish us with abundance of examples of what a woman thus disappointed is capable of. Joseph lost his liberty for having preserved his chastity inviolable. He was deprived of his offices, and shut up in a frightful dungeon, for having virtuously opposed the impudent and earnest solicitations of Potiphar's wife. And the Empress¹ Mary of Arragon, wife of Otto III., caused a young count of her Court to be cruelly put to death for having been more faithful to his prince than she was to her husband. He would never commit the crime to which

¹ Crispin in Othon. 3 Sigon.

she had long solicited him, which provoked her so much, that she herself accused him to the Emperor of having attempted to seduce her. That over-credulous prince condemned him, too hastily, to have his head cut off; but, soon after that was convinced of the injustice he had done him.

Such was the fate of Vinicius; he survived his victory but a very little time. Messalina, to whose power every thing yielded, not at all ashamed of having taken such scandalous measures, but enraged at their having been unsuccessful, and not being able to endure that her impudent behaviour should be continually reproached by his virtue, had him put to death. He was poisoned by her order, and was a tragic instance of the danger there was in disobeying her.

All that has been said of this Empress is but a sketch of her abominations, which were without number. She was not content with being plunged in the grossest and most infamous debaucheries (such as prostituting herself to all comers,¹ without being ever able to satisfy her insatiable desires), but she must needs have companions in her lewdness; and because example is of great force, and seems to authorise wickedness, she imagined that, if there were any other women who could be prevailed on to imitate her, it might in a great measure diminish the scandal. She tried persuasion, but finding that would not do,² compelled ladies of the highest quality in Rome to live with her in that shameful state of libertinism; and, because that was not sufficient, she determined to carry her brutality as far as it would go, and therefore obliged these ladies to prostitute themselves to the greatest de-

¹ Xiphillin. in Claud.

² Aurelius Victor; Epitome in Claud.

bauchees that could be found, and that in the presence of their husbands, who had to be spectators of their own infamy, and very often accomplices and consenters to it,¹ for she heaped favours and rewards upon all such as *approved of these abominable prostitutions*; while, on the contrary, those who refused to be witnesses of their shame, were sure to die martyrs to their bashfulness and modesty. At last this monster of impurity, being weary of all sorts of vices of the ordinary kind, for which she had no longer any relish, resolved to invent something new, to gratify, if possible, her unbounded lewdness. To this end she ordered a chamber in the palace to be fitted up on purpose to be the scene of these abominable prostitutions, where the chastity of the most distinguished ladies in Rome was to be violated. On the door of this infamous place she caused to be written the name of the most notorious courtesan of the town, whom she personated, and was the first to prostitute herself promiscuously to every man that pleased to come, and that every night, making a most shameful profit of her crimes, and brutally exacting the price of those favours she granted so easily, never retiring till morning.²

Here amazement seems to be exhausted; for it cannot be conceived how these things (which were so notorious and public that the most distant nations were not ignorant of them) should have been unknown to Claudius only, and that the Emperor had nobody about him sufficiently devoted to him to inform him of the horrible debaucheries of his wife. It is true that he was so stupid and weak, that Messalina made him believe whatever she had a

¹ Juvenal. Sat. 6.

² *Et lassata viris, nondum satiata, recessit.* (Juvenal. *ibid.*)



From the painting by Georges Rouault

Roman Courtesans

mind to, easily destroying the effect of what any body told him to her prejudice. She had gained such an ascendancy over him, that nobody durst trust him with a secret upon which his life depended, being assured that, as she governed him so absolutely, she would soon extort it from him; for she had the secret of making him approve of everything that she did, even of her prostitutions.

This was evident in the affairs of Mnester, the most famous dancer of his time. Messalina, who had long since acquired a front of brass, not knowing what it was to blush, and always running after new pleasures, was so furiously in love with him, that she erected statues in honour of him at the Emperor's expense, which were so many monuments of her impudence as well as of the Emperor's weakness.

But, however ardently and earnestly she solicited Mnester to show the same complaisance to her that so many others had, she always met with a resistance that was not to be overcome, which did not proceed from his virtue, but from his fear of being one day punished for his rashness. Messalina was not discouraged; she pressed the comedian, caressed him, threatened him, and in short, attacked him in so many forms that, being at last conquered by her importunities, he promised to do whatever she pleased, if the Emperor consented.

To insist upon such terms as those was (one would imagine) to require impossibilities, because one must be out of their wits to suppose an Empress could carry her impudence so far as to hope for her husband's consent in such a case. But these conditions, however extravagant and difficult in appearance, cost Messalina no trouble at all. She went directly to Claudius; and after a thousand

deceitful caresses which she bestowed upon him, complained that, having sent for Mnester upon some trifling business, he had refused to obey her: she dwelt much upon the contempt people showed for her orders, and pretended to be much afflicted at it, beseeching the Emperor to give directions that more respect should be paid her for the future. Claudius, who was stupid and foolish in the highest degree, was immediately convinced of the reasonableness of her words; he sent for Mnester, and commanded him to obey the Empress in every particular. Such a positive order cured Mnester of his scruples, and dissipated all his fears. He became Messalina's gallant with the approbation of Claudius, which approbation he did not fail to take advantage of afterwards.

This dancer, however, was not over faithful to Messalina, for he was also beloved by Poppæa. The Empress, being desirous to keep her gallant to herself, was no sooner informed of this intrigue, than she made up her mind to destroy her rival. This lady was remarkable for her extraordinary beauty, to which none could be compared but that of Sabina Poppæa, her daughter, who was much handsomer, and at least as debauched as the mother, as if it had been decreed that all of that name were to be lewd and beautiful.¹ She was accused of living in criminal intimacy with Valerius Asiaticus, a senator of great distinction, who had been twice consul. This was the crime with which Messalina reproached Poppæa, and she was the more zealous in this affair, because, in the same accusation, she contrived to involve Asiaticus,² that she might have an opportunity of seizing on the famous gardens of Lucullus, which he was in possession of, and

¹ Dio. lib. 60.

² Tacit. Ann. 11.

which she had long coveted. Thus her jealousy and avarice were both concerned in the destruction of Poppæa and Asiaticus.

Suilius and Sosibius, tutors of Prince Britannicus, joined with her in this piece of iniquity. Those venal wretches accused Asiaticus of having committed adultery with Poppæa; and, because Messalina was ashamed to punish in others what she had been so often guilty of herself, this accusation was corroborated by another of greater importance. Asiaticus was charged with having persuaded the garrisons of Germany to revolt, and with promising to put himself at the head of them. The calumny was carried yet further; it was said that Asiaticus had been the author of Caligula's murder, and that he had boasted of that horrid assassination. Messalina could not possibly have been better served, nor could her wicked agents find out a more plausible pretence for Messalina's vengeance and persecution, than that of bringing to justice a person who had murdered an Emperor.

Asiaticus, upon this, was arrested at Baïæ; he was loaded with chains, brought to Rome, and conducted to the Emperor's palace to be tried. As he was innocent of all these crimes, he appeared before the Emperor with such an assurance as always accompanies a good conscience. He vindicated himself so effectually, by proving the falsehood of this charge, and putting to confusion one of his accusers, by reproaching him with the heinous crimes he had been guilty of, that the Emperor, being convinced of his innocence, showed a great disposition to pardon him. Messalina herself (cruel and implacable as she was) could not forbear showing some signs of hu-

manity upon this occasion, and was not able to hear him justify himself with so much strength and eloquence, without shedding tears. But her compassion soon gave place to her covetousness; and, as she was not a person to be wicked by halves, especially when the question was to gratify her darling passions, she charged Vitellius (as she went out of the Emperor's chamber, where this farce was acted) to be sure not to let the pretended criminal escape. *Messalina could not have given this commission* to a man more capable of executing it; she was well acquainted with his character, for he had frequently given her sufficient proofs of his abilities in cases where baseness and perfidy were necessary. This corrupt and flattering courtier, seeing that Claudius hesitated whether he should condemn or acquit Asiaticus, approached the Emperor, and with diabolical malice affected a false compassion for the prisoner, with whom he said he had always lived in the closest friendship. He mentioned everything in his favour that he thought capable of touching the Emperor, and dwelt upon the many considerable services he had rendered to the state, particularly to Claudius's family, and afterwards, shedding some artificial tears, entreated the Emperor, in the name of Asiaticus, to give him leave to choose what kind of death he liked best, since he desired no other favour.

Claudius, believing that Vitellius spoke thus at the instigation of Asiaticus, granted his request. The unfortunate senator, being thus condemned, chose to be bled to death, and so had all his veins opened, after protesting that it would not have grieved him so much to have lost his life by some of Tiberius's artifices, or the cruelty of

Caligula, as by the cunning stratagems of a wicked woman, and a number of vile mercenary sycophants.

Poppæa did not long survive Asiaticus, for Messalina so terrified her with threats, that she chose rather to die once for all by her own hand than remain in continual fear and apprehension. The accusers of Asiaticus, who had not prosecuted him for nothing, were amply rewarded for their pains. Crispinus, captain of the guards, received a great sum of money, together with the insignia and privileges of the prætors, for having arrested him at Baia. Messalina made Sosibius a very considerable present, and the best posts in the Empire were bestowed upon Vitellius, who preserved them by the same methods by which he had acquired them, that is to say, by all sorts of baseness and wickedness, and especially flattery, which he carried so far as to carry always about him¹ one of Messalina's shoes, which he was not ashamed to kiss continually in public, as if it had been something sacred.

After all that we have said of Messalina, it might have been thought impossible for her to go to greater lengths in wickedness than she had hitherto done, and that there was no crime left for her to commit; but we have yet one to speak of, which was without example. She took it in her head to marry publicly Gaius Silius, with whom she was excessively in love, and so to have two husbands at once. Silius belonged to one of the most illustrious families of Rome, and never was there seen a handsomer man. He was appointed consul for the next year. His wife was Junia Silana, a lady of great distinction and merit, and Messalina, in pursuance of her ridiculous

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell.

scheme, obliged him to put her away, in order to supply her place.

Though this shameless Empress had long since bid adieu to every pretence of decency, yet she could not but foresee that this monstrous marriage must needs make a great noise throughout all the Empire. This reflection induced her to prepare people's minds for a thing so extraordinary, by introducing¹ the custom of women having several husbands. She imagined that, however strange it might appear at first, example would soon authorise and make it familiar, and that nobody could reasonably blame her for doing what many others did as well as she. But afterwards, considering that people would never be reconciled to such a novelty, because of the great and many inconveniences it must be attended with, and being weary of ordinary pleasures, which were become insipid by being so easily obtained, she was resolved not to deny herself any longer the satisfaction she hoped for from this marriage, but to carry it out, let what would happen, without giving herself any trouble about the consequences, not doubting but she should get over it as she had done in the case of innumerable crimes of which she had been guilty. Taking it therefore for granted that there was nothing too difficult for her to perform, she heaped all sorts of favours, riches and honours upon her new husband that was to be. The servants of the Emperor, as well as the most magnificent and costly furniture in the palace, were all sent to Silius's house, and nothing was wanting but the title of Emperor.

Silius, however, in the midst of all this pomp and splendour, was far from being easy in his mind; he foresaw the

¹Tacit. Ann. 11. Xiphilin. Suet. vit. Claud.

peril to which he exposed himself by this rash and hazardous enterprise. Fear of punishment made him even hesitate for some time between duty and ambition; but at last he shut his eyes against all danger, whether it was that he hoped, by some means or other, to escape the chastisement he deserved, or that he was apprehensive of being ruined if he should disoblige Messalina, or, in short, that, being weary of a private life, he was resolved to obtain the throne if possible. Be this as it may, he was the first to press Messalina to conclude the marriage, and to celebrate it publicly.

All the usual solemnities were strictly observed. The contract was drawn up in due form.¹ Witnesses were called in to sign it; the solemn clause (that they were married to have children) was not forgotten; but the miracle of all was, that Claudius signed the contract himself, Messalina making him believe that all this was being done only to avert from him certain misfortunes with which he was threatened (and which were foretold would befall him) in order to make them fall upon Silius. A visit paid by Claudius into the country a few days after gave them an opportunity of celebrating their nuptials with great magnificence; Messalina appeared dressed like a bride and sacrificed to the gods for the prosperity of her marriage; and, after a superb entertainment which she gave the guests, at which she was placed (according to the custom of the ceremony) next to Silius, to whom she showed all the marks of tenderness and affection that she could have done if he had been her real husband, she retired to her new husband's house, and lived with him as intimately as if she had been with Claudius.

¹Tacit. Ann. xi.

This story would certainly pass for a fable, if the veracity of those who have transmitted it to us could be called in question; and Tacitus, who is one of them, says he is persuaded that posterity will not easily give credit to it. But what is most wonderful is, that Claudius, who was then at Ostia (whither Messalina excused herself from going on pretence of some indisposition) knew nothing of what had taken place, though everything was done in presence of the three orders; and in all probability this piece of unprecedented assurance would have passed unnoticed as the rest had done, if Narcissus had not taken care to inform the Emperor of it.

This favourite, as well as many of the other freedmen, had abandoned the interests of Messalina, after she had put to death one of their fraternity named Polybius, whom she had formerly loved but too well. This was looked upon by them as a specimen of what they had to fear, and united them against the Empress, upon whose friendship they saw plainly they could never depend. They therefore resolved to ruin her, and waited only for a fair opportunity of doing it effectually. Callistus, Pallas and Narcissus in particular thought it incumbent on them to inform the Emperor of this marriage, of Messalina with Silius, for fear he should come to know of it by some other means, and then they would have been liable to punishment for so criminal a silence; besides, they plainly saw their lives were not in safety if Silius should succeed in his enterprise. Pallas and Callistus, however, soon changed their opinion, and were determined to try if it was not possible to prevail on Messalina to return to her duty, and break off her infamous commerce with Silius. This resolution was as soon

abandoned as taken, and another was adopted. On the one hand, they were convinced of the absolute power the Empress had over Claudius, and that she could make him believe what she pleased, if she could but be admitted to speak to him a moment; and on the other hand, being persuaded that, as she had been accustomed all her life to such unbounded libertinism, it was absolutely impossible for her to break herself of it, they resolved not to meddle in it one way or the other: Pallas, because he was afraid of undoing himself in endeavouring to ruin the Empress; and Callistus, because he knew, by the long experience he had gained in the preceding reigns, that the sure way of maintaining one's power and influence in Courts is by practising the arts of dissimulation, and not presuming to give advice. Thus these self-interested and base favourites preferred their safety to their duty; the fear of losing their fortune quite silenced them, and they thought it the best way to leave the management of this affair to Narcissus.

As for him, he persisted in his design of informing the Emperor of the marriage of his wife with Silius; and his only care was, how to keep it secret from Messalina.¹ Claudius had two concubines, who were more in his good graces than most other people, who, being flattered and caressed and promised great rewards by Narcissus, undertook to disclose the affair to Claudius. They went to him at Ostia, and throwing themselves at his feet, told him, with seeming fear and consternation, that Silius, who was become husband to Messalina by a monstrous and treasonable impudence, thought of nothing less than dethroning him; that at Rome everything was in confusion,

¹ Tacit. Ann. 11.

and that Silius was practically Emperor; to which they added, that Narcissus had charged them with this commission. Claudius, struck with astonishment and fear, sent for Narcissus, who was also at Ostia, and interrogated him as to this marriage. This was what he expected; so, affecting a melancholy countenance and voice, he confessed that hitherto indeed he had concealed from him the horrible adulteries and prostitutions of his wife with Valens, Plautius, and innumerable others, to whom she had entirely abandoned herself, thereby affronting her husband and her Emperor in the most insulting and outrageous manner; he had been unwilling to acquaint the whole Empire with the shame and disgrace which this abominable and scandalous behaviour brought upon Cæsar's family; and besides, he had still entertained hopes that Messalina would repent of her wickedness; but, since the dishonour was now public, and Messalina showed no signs of repentance, and he himself desired to be acquainted with his wife's conduct, he was no longer at liberty to disguise the truth, nor to conceal the Empress's marriage with Silius, which had been celebrated in the most solemn manner before the whole city. Geta, captain of the guards, and Turranius, superintendent of the corn supplies, confirmed what Narcissus had said; and in short, everybody advised the Emperor to provide for his safety. The Emperor was at first so terrified, that he thought himself ruined beyond redemption. He made what haste he could to camp, but, not thinking himself safe there, enquired every moment whether Silius was yet Emperor.

In the meantime Messalina, being intoxicated with her wild and disorderly pleasures, was in the house of Silius,

her new husband, with whom, in spite of all the crimes she was guilty of, she enjoyed herself as calmly as if she had nothing to fear. She had assembled a troop of favourites and women as debauched as herself at a masquerade. They celebrated the feast of Bacchus with all the impure ceremonies and infamous gestures which were practised at the Bacchanalia. Valens was one of this disgraceful party; and this vicious physician, having climbed to the top of a high tree, cried out that he foresaw some dreadful calamity that was to happen to them from Ostia. This was literally verified, for, soon after, the people came from all parts to give them notice that Claudius, being fully informed how matters were, was coming from Ostia to punish the horrid behaviour of his wife as well as that of her wicked accomplices. Cæsar's approach struck this insolent company with such panic, that they all fled different ways. Messalina retired into the gardens of Lucullus, of which she had robbed Asiaticus; and Silius, affecting a false security, went to the council to perform the functions of his office, though in reality his apprehensions were as great as the danger that threatened him.

As for Messalina, she was indeed terribly alarmed, but yet did not despair of extricating herself, if she could but speak a few words to Claudius, so much did she rely on his stupidity. This would not be the first time she had got out of danger by making notorious lies pass for truths. She had the secret of lulling him to sleep by her artful caresses, which seldom failed of producing the designed effect.

In order to move him to compassion, she sent Britannicus and Octavia to meet him, and entreated the great

vestal Vibidia to accompany them.¹ She herself followed on foot from one end of Rome to the other, abandoned by everybody, for none were touched with her misfortunes, on account of the abominable life she had led. At last finding, at the farthest gate of the town, a gardener's cart, she got into it, and went to meet the Emperor, whom she hoped to mollify if she could possibly secure an audience. Narcissus, who knew very well of what importance it was that she should not see Claudius (who in that case would certainly have pardoned her) very cunningly contrived that they should not meet. He took care to accompany the Emperor in his coach, and talked of nothing all the way but Messalina's prostitutions. Vitellius and Cæcina, who were also in the coach, kept a profound silence, and spoke not a word either for or against her, that they might not incur her displeasure if she came off victorious, and also that it might not be said they approved of her debaucheries, if they undertook to justify her.

At last Messalina appeared, and loudly insisted that the mother of Britannicus and Octavia should have an opportunity of speaking to the Emperor. This was a critical moment for Narcissus, and it is certain that his fate and that of Messalina depended on that instant. This subtle courtier, who knew the importance of it, did all he could to hinder the Emperor from hearing her, and amused him with reading memoirs which contained the history of Messalina's conduct, until she and her children were left far behind. Vibidia, however, notwithstanding all Narcissus's endeavours, found means to speak to Claudius. She represented to him with great

¹ Tacit. Ann. 11.

freedom, that he ought not to take for granted all that had been told him of Messalina; that these reports were so many impostures which her enemies had invented to blacken her in his opinion, and ruin her. That at least it was but reasonable she should be heard before she was condemned. Narcissus, who was afraid this vestal might change the Emperor's mind, which he knew was irresolute enough, interrupted her abruptly, and told her that Messalina would be heard, but that a vestal as she was should mind her own business.

Claudius was all this while quite dumb, and, to see him, one would have imagined that he was in no way interested in what passed. But as soon as he arrived at Rome, Narcissus very cunningly conducted him to Silius's house, which he found magnificently adorned with the most sumptuous furniture of his palace, which had belonged to the Drususes and Neros, his ancestors. He then fell into a rage proportionate to his shame, and immediately ordered Silius, and some of the other seducers of Messalina, to be put to death. Lateranus owed his safety to the merit and services of his uncle, and Cæsonius was pardoned for reasons that modesty will not permit us to mention, and for which he deserved, long ago, to have lost his life.

Mnester pleaded the absolute command of Claudius to obey Messalina in every particular; and protested that he should never have been guilty, if he had not been so by order of the Emperor; that, being forced to obey, he became a criminal with regret and by necessity, far from having those ambitious and self-interested views which Messalina's other lovers had, who only dishonoured the

Emperor with an intent to aggrandize their own families, or to gratify their passions.

Claudius was a little staggered by these reasons, and without doubt would have pardoned Mncster, if all the freedmen had not represented to him, that he ought not to forgive a crime in him that had cost so many others their lives, and that death ought to expiate his assurance in having defiled the Emperor's bed; since, in fact, he had committed adultery with Messalina, whether it was by his consent or by force; so he underwent the same fate as the rest.

While all this was going on, Messalina, who had retired to the gardens of Lucullus, was in terrible agitation. Sometimes she despaired of being ever able to obtain her pardon, and at other times flattered herself that she might probably obtain forgiveness by the help of those caresses that had so often re-established her in the good graces of Claudius. It is certain that, if Narcissus had not hastened the death of the Empress, and thereby put it out of Claudius's power to forgive her, he would have done it; for having returned to his palace, and finding a good supper served up, he forgot, over his cups, all he had been told of Messalina, and commanded that somebody should go and tell that miserable wretch (that was the term he made use of) to come and justify herself the next morning.

The Empress's vindication of herself would infallibly have brought about her acquittal and the ruin of her accusers. Narcissus was persuaded that his life depended on the death of Messalina, and that he should be undone if she was admitted to an audience of the Emperor, because he knew that Claudius would never have

the resolution to condemn her if she made her appearance before him, in which case she would have found no difficulty in making him believe whatever she pleased; he therefore resolved to risk everything. He went out of the Emperor's chamber, and meeting some centurions, ordered them in the Emperor's name, to go and put Messalina to death; and Euodus, a freedman belonging to Claudius, was commanded to assist at the execution. They went immediately to the gardens of Lucullus, where they found Messalina lying upon the ground in such circumstances as would naturally have excited pity. Lepida, her mother, was with her, not being willing to quit her in her misfortunes, though the Empress had behaved very undutifully to her in her prosperity. Her mother, knowing how many and heinous her crimes had been, exhorted her to anticipate, by a voluntary death, the cruel one, which no doubt was preparing for her. But Messalina, who had been so long accustomed to pleasure and vice as to be utterly incapable of any sentiments of honour (for suicide was so accounted among the Romans), could do nothing but shed tears, and bewail her miserable condition.

In the meantime the soldiers broke open the doors of the garden, and the captain presented himself before her without speaking a word. Euodus, who had been a slave, did not show her the same respect, but on the contrary, affronted her in the most outrageous manner, brutally reproaching her¹ with all the shameful actions of her life, and insulted her with a rudeness that was worthy of his former condition. This treatment soon gave the Empress to understand that there was no hope left for

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

her. She attempted to kill herself with a poniard, which her trembling hand frequently applied to her bosom, but as often refused to do its office; but the centurion, without waiting any longer, spared her the trouble, and ran his sword through her body.

Claudius was at supper when the account of her death was brought him. The messenger did not inform him whether she had died by her own hand or another person's, nor did he give himself the trouble to ask any questions about it; on the contrary, as if they had told him the most indifferent news in the world, he called for some wine, and continued to eat and drink very heartily. The next day he showed no tokens either of joy or grief; nay, so great was his stupidity, and so little did he remember what had happened, that one day being at table, he asked why the Empress did not come.¹

Such was the miserable end of Messalina, whose life was one continued series of monstrous crimes. And here it must be observed, that she was massacred in the gardens of Lucullus, which she had violently taken away from Asiaticus, and in order to obtain them, had most barbarously murdered him.

¹ Sueton. vit. Claud.

AGRIPPINA

SECOND WIFE OF CLAUDIUS



NOT one of the Empresses has made more noise than Agrippina. Everything connected with her was remarkable; her birth, her beauty, her faults, her good qualities, and her misfortunes. She was daughter of Germanicus,¹ the delight of the Roman people, and of Agrippina, granddaughter of Augustus, who was delivered of her in a town which was afterwards called the colony of Agrippina, and now Cologne. She was observed to have a double tooth on the right side, which Pliny looked upon as a certain presage of great fortune.²

Agrippina had received from nature all the advantages of body and mind, that would have rendered her a most accomplished princess, if she had not degraded them by making a very bad use of them. Her beauty³ yielded to none in Rome. She had a majestic air, noble manners, and a lively and enterprising intellect, capable of the greatest undertakings, which she gave proof of in the refined vigour of those curious memoirs, which she composed upon her own adventures,⁴ and which were of no small service to Tacitus, the historian, when he wrote

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

² Plin. hist. nat. cap. 8.

³ Xiphil. in Claud.

⁴ Voss. de Hist. Lat. I. 1.

his Annals. But, on the other hand, her avarice was insatiable,¹ her jealousy such as made her capable of the most cruel revenge; and especially, her ambition was without bounds, which was the principal, and perhaps the only cause, of all her crimes and misfortunes. Daughter, sister, niece, wife and mother, of Emperors or Cæsars,² from her cradle she had so violent a desire to rule, that she could set no limits to it. This vice was so ingrained in her very nature, that it corrupted all her actions, and produced in great abundance all sorts of crimes.

Agrippina was brought up with her grandmother, Antonia, who, by her irreproachable conduct, might have served her as a model of virtue; but this excellent³ princess, who educated the children of her son Germanicus along with her own, and endeavoured to inspire them with sentiments of honour and goodness, soon perceived that all her labour was in vain. She had the mortification of finding her granddaughters capable of the most infamous actions, at an age when they could not be thought susceptible of any passions; but vice made its appearance before their reason began to dawn,⁴ and they sullied their tender years by committing the most horrible incest with their brother, Caligula; so true it is, that modesty, prudence, and virtue, are not always the fruits of birth, good example, or instruction; it is too often seen that these virtues are more owing to constitution than anything else.

Agrippina was very young when her mother brought

¹ Plin. lib. 7. c. 8.

² Agrippina was a great granddaughter of Augustus, granddaughter of Agrippa, daughter of Germanicus, wife of Claudius, sister of Caligula, and mother of Nero.

³ Eutrop. Suet. vit. Cai.

⁴ Dio. lib. 59.

to Rome the ashes of Germanicus, which melancholy sight opened afresh the wound which the death of that accomplished prince had made in the hearts of the Romans, and did not a little contribute to the extraordinary affection which they had, and always preserved, for his children. Tiberius, jealous as he was of the merit of this great man (and of whose death he was not innocent) yet affected a deep sorrow for his death, which he pretended to regret as much as possible, and, taking upon himself the care of his children, invited Gaius Caligula to live with him, and, as soon as Agrippina was of a proper age, married ¹ her to Domitius Ahenobarbus.

This nobleman, besides his illustrious birth, had the honour of being related to Cæsar's family, and therein consisted all his merit; for, excepting that, the sun never shone upon a more wicked man. He was perfidious, brutal, cruel, stained with murders, adulteries, and even the most horrible incest with his sister Lepida, in short he was loaded with all sorts of crimes.² He owned, himself, that from his marriage with Agrippina, nothing could ever spring but what would be pernicious to the republic; and, in fact, no good was to be expected from the union of so detestable a man and a woman,³ whose vice and lewdness might be dated almost from her cradle.

This prediction was but too well verified by the birth of Nero, who was born at Antium, and came into the world feet foremost. He was the cruellest scourge that could afflict the Empire. His parents deliberated a great while what they should call him, and Agrippina having desired Caligula, who reigned at that time, to give him a name, the Emperor, out of derision, would needs have

¹ Tacit. Ann. 4.

² Sueton. vit. Ner.

³ Plin.

him called Claudius, because he was then the sport of the Court.¹ This vexed Agrippina extremely, and she had him named Domitius after his father.

As Agrippina had started with committing incest, nobody could expect that she would prove an example of chastity; neither did she belie the bad opinion that everybody had of her, for she lived with her brother Gaius in disgraceful intimacy.² Tigellinus was banished for having carried on an amour with her, and Lepidus, her cousin-german and brother-in-law, was, according to Dion, put to death for having received criminal favours from her.

Lepidus, without doubt, did not deserve less punishment, for he was bound to Agrippina by so many ties, that he ought to have behaved more honourably towards her; this, however, was not the fault that made him so blamable in the eyes of Caligula; for the Emperor, in putting him to death, intended to punish his ambition more than his debaucheries; since Lepidus designed to pave himself a way to the throne through Agrippina's means,³ and she endeavoured to make Lepidus her friend with the same view. This design cost those who were engaged in it very dear, for Lepidus lost his head,⁴ and Agrippina had the mortification of being forced to carry the urn, wherein were enclosed the ashes of her lover, upon her shoulders, from the place of execution to Rome. This was not the only suffering she underwent; Gaius, being disgusted at her and her other sister, railed at them most bitterly, reproached them with their shameful and scandalous crimes, published their love letters, which

¹ Suet. vit. Ner.

² Tacit. Ann. 14.

³ Rutll. in itiner. Lepid.

⁴ Dio. lib. 59.

informed the whole city of their intrigues, and banished them to the island of Pontia, after having consecrated, to Jupiter the Avenger, three poniards, which he pretended they had prepared in order to assassinate him.

The death of Caligula put an end to Agrippina's exile. Her uncle Claudius recalled her and her sisters, and restored to them all that their father (who was dead) had bequeathed them, and which Caligula had seized upon. It did not appear that Agrippina's banishment had in the least diminished her ambition, which was still predominant; on the contrary, the magnificence and splendour of the Court increased her thirst after power to such a degree, that she set no bounds to it. This devouring passion extinguished the few sentiments of honour she had left, so that she resolved to employ all sorts of means to advance her fortune. The first project thought of was to try all possible arts to make the Emperor, her uncle, in love with her. With this view, she took care to display all her charms, which this weak prince was the more susceptible to, as she did not fail to heighten them by such artful and engaging ways, as few people would have been able to resist, and of which she was perfect mistress. Claudius had not penetration enough to see into her intentions, being too stupid to comprehend that all this was practised to further some deep design. This, however, was not the only method Agrippina took to obtain her ends, for her policy soon suggested other ways. She was apprehensive that she might not be able of herself to gain her point, for which reason she thought it necessary to look out for a husband capable of giving her all the assistance she stood in need of, and who had ambition and courage to seize the Empire in case of

Claudius's death. Galba seemed a very fit person for this purpose; the important offices he held, his high birth, and great reputation, made him of importance at Court, and in the whole Empire. But, as he responded but indifferently to her advances, she turned her thoughts in the direction of Crispus Passienus. He had neither the nobility nor the power of Galba; but, to make amends, he was extremely rich, and she did not doubt but this treasure would be of great service to her in her chief scheme; for at all times money has been the chief motive in important undertakings. She married him, but knew how to get rid of him, as soon as she had possessed herself of his wealth. This furnished her, very opportunely, with the means of gratifying her taste for luxury and appearing everywhere with distinction, which, till then, she had not been able to do, because she inherited but the third part of her first husband's estate, which was but small. The figure she now made brought her into great repute at Court; but on the other hand it alarmed Messalina, and it was not very safe to provoke her. Agrippina, who had too much sense not to be aware of what she was exposing herself to, chose rather to dissemble than risk her life. She accordingly decided to affect great reserve and circumspection, when she was with the Emperor, and before witnesses, reserving her flatteries and caresses, which were scarcely ever innocent, for private opportunities.

It was not only with regard to Claudius that she was prodigal of her favours, for she bestowed them very liberally upon all who could be of any service to her in her projects, and was not long before she reaped the fruits of them; for, after Messalina's death, Callistus,

Narcissus and Pallas were each of them determined to have the honour of procuring the Emperor another wife. The three favourites had so completely got over Claudius, that he had neither power nor resolution to oppose the will and pleasure of these insolent ministers, who, having the sovereign authority thus vested in them, ordered everything as they pleased, without respecting the laws of the Emperor, who blindly gave in to them in all sorts of affairs; and they took care to keep him in this state of indolence, that they might have the sole direction and management of everything. Pallas was his steward, Narcissus his secretary, and Callistus gave answers to the petitions that were presented to him. In these three important posts, they became a scourge to the whole Empire, for, as they had raised themselves by all sorts of base actions, they performed the duties of their respective offices with the greatest insolence. People were obliged to pay them, with all possible deference and respect, that homage which was not given to the Emperors themselves without great regret. It was to them that the most considerable of the senators, as well as all others of the highest quality, paid their court assiduously, and in the most servile manner, to preserve their substance and their lives; for they were become the arbiters of everyone's fortunes. Children did not enjoy the inheritance of their parents, except when they were pleased to permit it. All the provinces groaned under the weight of the taxes they laid on them, only the least part of which was brought into the Emperor's coffers. Their houses were filled to overflowing with the wealth which they had acquired by rapine and oppression. In short, they knew so well how to fatten themselves at the

expense of others, that they were each of them richer than Cræsus.

After Narcissus and Callistus had recommended to Claudius, the one Petina, and the other Lolliæ, Pallas spoke for Agrippina. We have already noticed the reasons he alleged in her favour; they were such as determined Claudius to prefer her to the other two; but there remained one obstacle, and that was the near relationship that existed between them, for it was quite a new thing among the Romans for an uncle to marry his niece; such an alliance was always reckoned the forerunner of some misfortune to the Empire; for which reason it would never have been agreed to by Claudius, if Vitellius, the most servile wretch in the world, had not helped him to get over all scruples, with his usual artifice and cunning.

This flattering courtier, perceiving that the Emperor hesitated about concluding his marriage with Agrippina, because of the nearness of their relationship, represented to him that there was no need of all these difficulties, for that sovereign princes had nothing to do with the laws that were made for private persons; and that, for reasons of State, the ordinary rules and customs were frequently to be dispensed with; if he still persisted in these scruples, he advised him to leave the matter with the senate, the proper interpreters of the law, and if they decided in favour of the marriage, there could no longer be any room for doubts. Claudius consented to this proposal, and the senate was assembled for that purpose. Vitellius did not fail to hasten thither, and as soon as the affair was brought forward, exaggerated the necessity of the Emperor's taking another wife to assist him in his domes-

tic affairs,¹ that so he might be more at leisure to attend to those of the Empire. He added, that in his opinion there was no occasion to deliberate a moment upon the choice of a proper person, since Agrippina was the only one that could reasonably be proposed to him, because of the great qualities that Cæsar's wife ought to be possessed of, and which were not to be met with but in her. As to her being the Emperor's niece, no great stress ought to be laid upon that, the marriage being necessary for the good of the State, to which the laws should always give place. It would not be the only case in which things of that nature had been permitted, since formerly the marriage of cousin-germans was forbidden, and yet at present nothing was more common. The senate passed a decree conformable to the advice of Vitellius and the inclinations of Agrippina, who now became the wife of Claudius, and was advanced to that throne, which she had so ardently wished for. She signalised the beginning of her reign by an action that was agreeable to all the orders of the city; this was the recall of Seneca, the philosopher, from the banishment to which Claudius had condemned him (for a crime which was not very consistent with the gravity of his profession) and his appointment as tutor of Domitius. This was highly approved of by all, for Seneca was in great reputation at Rome; and everybody was in hopes that the young prince (being formed by so skilful a master) would have no other sentiments than those of honour and moderation.

Agrippina's advancement obtained for her no less than absolute power, and she thought of nothing but the means of preserving it; the methods, however, which she

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

adopted, were always either cruel or shameful. She kept all those in a servile and dependent state who were not important on account of their influence or their offices. She persecuted those whom she imagined she had any reason to be afraid of, and who could not be prevailed upon to espouse her interests. She won over (by granting the most criminal favours) such as by their power and authority at Court might be any hindrance to her vast projects; those who had resolution enough not to regard her threats, had very seldom virtue enough to resist her charms,¹ so that, between her power and her beauty, she gained all her points.

This success only served to make her more haughty, and the Emperor, after becoming her husband, became her slave. She governed this weak prince so completely, that she disposed of everything according to her own will and pleasure. If she had favours to confer, she neither minded birth nor merit, nor anything but the attachment that people had to her person; the result of which was, that the highest offices were bestowed upon upstarts, who had never been known or heard of before, except for having been guilty of some notorious crime, which had procured them her esteem. As for virtue, it remained in obscurity, because it was sure to meet with no recompense. People were admitted into the senate who possessed neither honour, nobility, nor merit, and at the same time the descendants of those patriots and senators who had been the ornaments of Rome, were languishing in misery and contempt; so that the most honourable governments and offices of the Empire were disgraced by the meanness and baseness of those who were exalted

¹Xiphilin. in Claud.

to them; and those glorious ornaments, which formerly were never granted but to the greatest and worthiest of men, were now prostituted to the vilest wretches and such as had been slaves.

To render service to the State was no longer the way to advance one's fortune; nor was the conquest of provinces, the winning of battles, or any such like exploits, the road to preferment in these miserable reigns; but it was by committing the blackest crimes that men attained to the dignity of prætor, censor, or consul, which glorious and honourable posts could now only be obtained by treasons, calumnies, murders and perjury.

But the most deplorable circumstance was, that the senate, being chiefly composed of low, servile people, approved (by shameful decrees) of all that the Emperors, or rather their minions, were pleased to do. What they did in favour of Pallas will be sufficient to show to what a miserable state of servitude this venerable body was reduced, which was formerly so respected and so jealous of its liberties, that it was not able to endure the least encroachments of the first Emperors, but was now obliged to yield to every honour and caprice of a shameless woman, and the vilest wretches in the Empire.

Thus Rome, after having groaned under the tyrannical government of Messalina, fell under that of Agrippina,¹ who was not less cruel, nor less covetous, nor perhaps much less shameless. There was indeed this difference between them, that, whereas the former dishonoured her husband and the Empire by prostitutions, to which she was hurried by an invincible inclination to lib-

¹ Xiphilin. in Ner.

ertinism, the other was only guilty when her interest made it necessary. Messalina boasted of her debaucheries; Agrippina, on the contrary, disguised hers under the veil of a grave and demure countenance. In short, Messalina was bad through her natural disposition, the other through policy; for she only bestowed her favours upon those who could forward her ambitious views and promote the advancement of her son, which was the favourite project that employed all her thoughts, and for the success of which she took infinite pains, though it was foretold her that he would repay them with horrible ingratitude; for, having one day consulted the Chaldæans as to the fate of her son, the soothsayers answered that he would be Emperor, but that he would put her to death. The unfavourable part of this prediction certainly counterbalanced, at least, what was agreeable, and Agrippina had no reason to be overpleased with it; however,¹ the joy of having her ambition gratified would not permit her to reflect upon the evil which threatened her, but turned her thoughts entirely upon that which indulged her vanity; she was so transported that she cried out, "O, let my son kill me, provided he reigns."

As soon as Agrippina imagined her authority and power were sufficiently established, she turned all her thoughts to satisfying her vengeance.² Lollia Paulina was the first victim that was sacrificed to it; and we have already seen that the jealousy of this Empress was only appeased by the death of her rival. Calpurnia, a very illustrious lady, and of the highest quality, paid for the praises that Claudius one day bestowed upon her

¹Dio. Tacit. Ann. 14. Sueton.

²Xiphil. in Claud.

beauty at the expense of her life; and all those whom Agrippina found amiable enough to please the Emperor became the objects of her hatred and persecution.

Her covetousness was also the occasion of her committing great cruelties: she suborned false witnesses against those whose riches she could not obtain by other means; and, however innocent people were, they were soon thought criminal enough, if possessed of great wealth; nor was it possible for anybody to save their life, but by relinquishing their estates to the greediness of Agrippina. Statilius Taurus¹ incurred the implacable hatred of this Empress by refusing to give up all his fortune to her. He was the son of that Taurus who had the honour of being twice consul, and who so remarkably displayed his magnificence in the noble amphitheatre, which he built at an enormous expense in Augustus's reign. He owned gardens which he reckoned the finest in Rome, and which he kept in excellent order. Agrippina had long earnestly coveted these gardens, but not having a lawful pretence to seize them, she had recourse to her ordinary means, calumny and oppression.

The Court was full of those venal mercenary wretches, who were capable of all manner of wickedness, when it became necessary to advance their fortunes, so that there was no need of Agrippina giving herself much trouble to send a man for her purpose: Tarquinius Priscus soon relieved her of all anxiety upon that score. This villain had been lieutenant to Taurus, when he was proconsul of Africa; and, though he had been a constant witness of Taurus's mildness and integrity in the exercise of his

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

government, he did not scruple to accuse him falsely of corruption and even of magic.

Taurus, who was perfectly innocent, was so astonished to find that the very person was become his accuser, who was best able to justify him, if he had been attacked by another, that he was not able to bear such an instance of perfidiousness and ingratitude: he chose therefore to anticipate what he took for granted would be the judgment of the senate, and in a fit of despair deprived himself of that life, which in all probability they would have spared; for they were so firmly persuaded of his innocence, that, notwithstanding all the influence and interest of the Empress, Priscus was deprived of his office, and ignominiously expelled from the senate. This was not the only punishment he underwent, for, soon after, being himself convicted of rapine, extortion, and other crimes,¹ he was condemned to suffer the penalty of the law in cases of that nature; and the remembrance of his conduct towards Taurus made all the world rejoice at his execution.

Agrippina was extremely piqued and mortified at the misfortune that had befallen this man, who had only turned false accuser at her request, and to do her pleasure; but what happened to Vitellius, her chief favourite, affected her still more. He was accused by Junius Lupus of having dared to carry his ambition so far as to look at the throne with a wishful eye, and to entertain hopes of seizing the Empire. Claudius, who was timid, jealous, and suspicious, listened very attentively to this accusation: but the Empress, who had her own reasons for protecting Vitellius, very warmly espoused his interests.

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

She at first had recourse to tears and entreaties, but proceeded at last to threats, to oblige the Emperor to pardon him. She succeeded in her undertaking: Claudius believed everything that she had a mind he should believe, and Vitellius was acquitted. Junius, his accuser, was banished; for Vitellius, out of his good nature and compassion, desired that no other punishment should be inflicted on him.

All these successes encouraged Agrippina to carry her schemes still further; and that her son Domitius might be as nearly related as possible to Claudius, she formed a design to get him adopted by the Emperor, though he had his son Britannicus, a young prince of great promise. Pallas employed his influence to bring this about; and in order to gain his point, he had only to speak the word. Domitius then became Cæsar's adopted son, and was called Nero. The people, who approved of this piece of injustice, applauded it heartily, saying that the Emperor had done very well to associate with himself a partner in the government, who might share its fatigues with him. Praises in abundance were bestowed upon Nero, and Agrippina was honoured with the title of August.

Claudius soon contrived that his favourite Pallas should be rewarded for the step he had made him take; and this deserves to be related, because it shows what a pitch the stupidity of the Emperor, the insolence of his freedmen, and the senility of the senate had reached. A decree had been passed against those women who prostituted themselves to slaves. Claudius gave out that this salutary law had been made at the instigation of Pallas. Borea Soranus and all the other senators proposed that Pallas (by way of recompense for the extraor-

dinary services he had rendered the State) should be entreated to accept the prætorian insignia,¹ that he should have the privilege of wearing the gold ring, which belonged to the knights, and that he should be presented with a sum amounting to about seven hundred and fifty thousand livres. This modest slave, as Pliny calls him,² accepted the honours, but refused the money. Claudius went to thank the senate for their liberality; and told them, that Pallas, with great gratitude, accepted the honour of the ring and the prætorian insignia, but desired to be excused as to the money, being resolved to continue in his ancient poverty. This consisted in being possessed of only fifteen millions of livres.

Such commendable moderation procured him new honours. Scipio proposed that he should publicly receive the thanks of the senate, for that, being descended from the kings of Arcadia, he should forget the grandeur of his extraction, and stoop so low as to sacrifice himself to the welfare of the public, and condescend so far as to accept office under the Emperor. Pallas, in order to transmit to posterity this instance of his extraordinary modesty, ordered that, in his epitaph, it should be inserted that, the senate being inclined to make him a present of a considerable sum of money, he was content with having deserved it. It is difficult to say, which is the more capable of arousing the indignation of the reader, the provoking insolence of this rapacious villain, or the shameful baseness and senility of the senate, reduced to the miserable and hard necessity of prostituting to a rascal that deserved to be hanged such honours and praises as would have been too glorious even for the most vir-

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

² Plin. lib. 2. epist.

tuous and illustrious Romans. To this poor and despicable condition must all those expect to be reduced, who sacrifice their honour and duty to their fortune and ambition.

That of Agrippina ¹ was not yet satisfied, neither by the magnificent titles which were heaped upon her, the exalted station to which she was raised, nor the extraordinary advancement of her son, who was now within measurable distance of the throne. On the contrary, all this only served to augment her pride. She now resolved to omit no opportunity of showing to all the world what a pitch of grandeur she had attained. She went to the Capitol in a superb triumphal chariot, which till then had been a privilege belonging only to things sacred. She never honoured the public assemblies or temples with her presence except in a rich and most magnificent coach, passing through the streets with a pompous and numerous equipage, loaded with jewels, and clad in a robe of cloth of gold, the sumptuousness and splendour of which wonderfully set off her beauty: never had there been seen such pride and haughtiness.

She was not content with displaying all this magnificence before the inhabitants of Rome, but also resolved to give strangers and foreign kings an exalted idea of her splendour and authority. She commanded that the capital of the Ubians should be called after her name, and sent a colony thither. She showed herself one day, seated upon an elevated throne, between the Roman standards and the eagles, where she received the homage ² and submission of Caractacus, general of the troops of Britain, who, accompanied by his wife and

¹ Xiphilin. in Ner.

² Tacit. Ann. 12. c. 37.

brothers, came to return her thanks for his liberty. And, to make it appear that her interest and power did not consist only in a brilliant exterior, but in a real and solid authority, she opposed the Emperor's favourites in the affair of the Jews against the Samaritans. And, though Claudius had issued a decree in favour of the latter, Agrippina, who espoused the cause of king Agrippa, who interested himself for the Jews, had it revoked, and obliged the Emperor to issue one in favour of the Jews, on purpose to show that her solicitation was not to be resisted.

The report of the absolute power that Agrippina had acquired over the Emperor (of which she gave such manifest tokens), soon reached the most distant nations; and all countries strove with each other, which should pay her the most profound respect; so that not only the great men of Rome, but those of the whole world, endeavoured to give her all possible tokens of their entire submission. The most curious and magnificent presents were sent her from every corner of the earth; and among the rest, a nightingale as white as snow, which cost an immense sum, and a blackbird,¹ that spoke as distinctly as a man; a rarity that had never been seen before. Claudius, who did not know all that Agrippina was capable of, gave encouragement to her enterprises by his indolence and blind condescension to her will and pleasure, without reflecting that he acted against his own interests; and she depended so much on his stupidity, that there was nothing so difficult that she did not hope to succeed in it. She procured her son the privilege of wearing the *toga virilis*, long before the time allowed

¹ Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 10. cap. 59.

by the laws, and also that of standing for the consulship in the twentieth year of his age: she prevailed upon Claudius to give him leave to exercise the power of proconsul outside the city. She caused to be distributed (in the name of this young prince) a largess or present of money to the soldiers and people, in order, by means of this generosity, to diminish the affection which they had for Britannicus and prejudice them in favour of Nero. In short, she caused him to be declared prince of the Roman youth. And, that the magnificence of his apparel might be of a piece with his pompous titles and all the rest of his grandeur, when the ceremonial games in the Circus were performed, Nero appeared most sumptuously adorned with a triumphal robe, whilst Britannicus, on the contrary, was only clothed in his *prætexta*, a distinction that was thought very unjust, and caused many officers to reflect upon the hard usage which the Emperor's son met with. This compassion proved fatal to them; for all those who showed any tenderness for Britannicus were dismissed from their employments, and others, more devoted to Agrippina, put in their places. Geta and Crispinus were the first who were punished for showing some tokens of pity and affection for that poor prince. The Empress took from them their commissions as captains of the guard, and those two offices were combined in one and disposed of in favour of Burrus,¹ who, indeed, was perfectly skilled in the art of war, but knew very well from whom he received it, and upon what conditions it was given him.

Thus Agrippina, with great cunning and art, greedily seized upon every opportunity of showing her son to

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12. cap. 42.

advantage, in order to make him acceptable to the legions and the people; but nothing could have happened more luckily for him than a great scarcity of provisions, which afflicted Rome at that time. Agrippina, to make the evil appear greater than it was in reality,¹ stirred up, by her emissaries, a sort of sedition, to intimidate the Emperor, who was then indisposed, and not able to apply any remedy to this grievance. The people clamoured importunately for bread, and assembled in great multitudes, the noise of which soon reached the ears of Claudius, who being frightened by the bawling of the mob, declared by a decree, which Agrippina dictated, that they should address themselves to Nero, who was quite capable of governing; and that, his own indisposition not permitting him to take the necessary steps at this juncture, he had reposed that trust in Agrippina's son. Nero did not fail to make the most of the lessons his mother gave him. He caused a great quantity of corn to be distributed to the people, which he knew how to find without much trouble, and afterwards went to the Capitol, accompanied by the senators, to offer vows for the Emperor's recovery, which was certainly the thing in the world he least desired. Narcissus knew better than anybody that this was only a trick of Agrippina. He had thoroughly studied the Empress's temper, and consequently was not ignorant of the object of all her schemes and designs. He had more than once hinted them to the Emperor; for, being his secretary, he had frequent opportunities of speaking to him in private. For this reason Agrippina mortally hated this favourite, whom she continually found in her way, and always

¹ Zonar. Tacit. Ann. 12.

inflexible; but not daring to attack him openly, because of the power he had over the Emperor (which he sufficiently demonstrated in the affair of Messalina), she was very anxious to find means of destroying him secretly; and, for that purpose, endeavoured as much as possible to give the Emperor a bad impression of him, not directly, but with all the art and cunning she was mistress of. This made her eagerly embrace the opportunity of prejudicing Narcissus, which offered itself in the shame fight that was to be represented on the lake Fucinus, and for which Claudius had prepared and armed a hundred galleys. The borders of the lake and all the neighbouring hills and mountains were covered with an infinite number of people, that were come from Rome and all the towns thereabouts, to be present at this magnificent show. The Emperor,¹ clad in his coat of arms, was seated upon a splendid throne that was erected for him on an eminence, and Agrippina, most sumptuously apparelled, upon another just by him. The battle was fought without any bad consequences, but afterwards, the Emperor must needs have another performed by people on foot, for which purpose bridges had been thrown over the lake; Claudius had ordered a grand entertainment to be prepared, to amuse the whole Court, in a place fitted up for that purpose, just at the mouth of the lake, and on the very spot through which the water was to run when let go; but the expected enjoyment was changed into fear and dread; for, the bank being cut to give the water of the lake a passage into a canal that was dug to receive it, the water rushed out with such violence, that it bore down all before it, so that numbers

¹ Dio. lib. 60. Tacit. Ann. 12. Sueton. vit. Claud.

of people were drowned; and such a panic seized the whole multitude, that those who were nearest the water side, in order to save themselves from the danger, crowded upon those that were next to them, and they again upon the next, with such terrible cries, added to the horrible noise of the water, that even those who were most distant were terrified beyond expression: never had there been known so dreadful a disaster.

Claudius, who was naturally fearful, was more alarmed than other people, and Agrippina, seeing him in this situation, laid hold of the opportunity to irritate him against Narcissus, upon whom she threw all the blame, because he was the person the Emperor had made choice of to manage the whole affair. She told Claudius that nobody was at fault but he, whose sordid avarice had prompted him to put into his own coffers the money that was destined for this representation; that, under an appearance of fidelity and extraordinary attachment to his prince, he was guilty of the most notorious rapine and extortion; that the provinces groaned under his oppressions, and that, though his riches were prodigious, yet they were not able to satisfy his insatiable covetousness.

Narcissus defended himself with a great deal of resolution. He accused Agrippina of being insupportably proud and ambitious. He plainly showed the Emperor that, if she hated him, it was not because he was rich, but because he would not join with her in her wicked designs, being too faithful to his master. Narcissus was certainly in the right, and was well persuaded that the aversion Agrippina had to him was due to that. He did not scruple to explain himself very freely upon that subject, whenever he was in the company of his intimate

friends; and used to tell them that, whether Britannicus or Nero was Emperor after Claudius, he was sure neither one nor the other of them would suffer him to live long: Britannicus would put him to death, to revenge that of his mother; and Nero, because he would sacrifice him to Agrippina's resentment; but that, whatever happened, he thought the obligations he was under to the Emperor would never permit him to betray his interests; that it was from this motive that he had brought about the death of Messalina, who dishonoured her husband by her prostitutions, and for the same reason, he gave Claudius notice of Agrippina's bad intentions in other respects, adding that she did not lead an over chaste life. He declared that it would have been safer for the Emperor to have let Messalina live, because, as she was entirely taken up with her debaucheries, she had never been guilty of forming any designs against her husband's life; whereas Agrippina had already exterminated most of Cæsar's family, and aimed at nothing less than advancing her posterity to the throne.

Claudius himself had formerly thought something of the kind, and had been informed that Agrippina did not conduct herself very prudently, for he had heard of some of her gallantries and ambitious projects. He even one day in his cups ventured to say, that he suffered the wickedness of his wives for a time, but that it would fall heavily upon them at last. These words were told to Agrippina, who being apprehensive of undergoing Messalina's fate, resolved to be beforehand with Claudius, and get rid of him as soon as she could. But before she proceeded to this bold undertaking, she was

determined to sacrifice Domitia Lepida,¹ Nero's aunt, to her vengeance, whom she accused of practising magic, in order to compass the death of the Emperor's wife by her enchantments, and of having stirred up a revolt in Calabria to indulge her treasonable designs against the State.

Narcissus openly undertook to justify Domitia against these imaginary crimes, but Agrippina's authority prevailed against his solicitations, and Domitia was condemned to death. The interest that the Empress had in the destruction of this lady was soon discovered, and it was found out that Domitia, who was rich, had made Nero considerable presents from time to time, which so won his affections, that he expressed great love for his aunt, and at the same time kept away from his mother, who treated him rudely. This exasperated Agrippina against Domitia, of whose grandeur and beauty she was already jealous.

The Emperor, however, was afterwards informed, that Domitia had been condemned unjustly, and had perished through the artifice of Agrippina. He examined the behaviour of his wife, and reflected upon all that Narcissus had told him, which gave him so much uneasiness, that he imagined his health was much impaired by it, and went to Sinuessa to use the baths of that place; but he met with his death where he hoped to find his recovery, for Agrippina made use of that opportunity to poison him,² because she had not so many eyes upon her in that place, as she would have had at Rome. For this purpose, she made use of the famous Locusta,³ and gave her orders to prepare a very active poison. This was

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

² Tacit. Ibid.

³ Sueton. vit. Claud.

put into ¹ a ragout of mushrooms, which Claudius was very fond of; but because it operated but slowly, and the Emperor was seized with vomiting, they were afraid it would have no effect, so Xenophon, a physician,² who had no scruples, and was entirely devoted to Agrippina, pretending to assist the Emperor and facilitate his vomiting, put a feather down his throat, that was dipped in so subtle a poison that he expired a few moments after.

Agrippina kept his death secret, until she had made all arrangements in favour of her son. She assembled the senate and the consuls, and ordered them to offer vows for the Emperor's recovery; she heaped clothes upon him, as if it were to keep him warm; and, carrying her artifice further still, sent for the comedians to divert him, pretending it was by the directions of the Emperor; and, that nobody might inform Britannicus and Octavia of the death of their father, she kept them shut up in a room, where she pretended to make much of them, and heaped upon them the feigned caresses of a tender mother.

However, the report of Claudius's death was soon spread about the city, and Nero, accompanied by Burrus, showed himself to the soldiers, to whom he promised great rewards, and they, hearing nothing of Britannicus, proclaimed Agrippina's son Emperor. This hasty election was presently confirmed by a decree of the senate, who issued another soon after, by which Claudius was placed in the number of the gods. Nero, who knew that Claudius had been poisoned with mushrooms, ever after called them food for gods.³

¹ Dio. Xiphilin. in Claud.

² Aurel. Victor.

³ Sueton. in Ner. 33.

Agrippina, seeing her wishes accomplished, thought of nothing but how to gratify her revenge; she fell furiously upon all those who had thwarted her designs, and from whom she apprehended she had anything to fear. Junius Silanus¹ was the first victim of her hatred. This prince, whom Caligula called the golden sheep, because of the sweetness of his temper, was great grandson to Augustus, and had been made proconsul of Asia. Agrippina dreaded him, on account of his high birth and the great love the people had for him; for they openly declared that he ought to be Emperor, that he deserved it, and was more capable of it than Nero, a young man without experience, who had obtained the reins of government by means of innumerable crimes that his mother had committed. Another reason induced Agrippina to destroy Silanus, which was the fear she was in lest he should revenge the death of his brother Lucius Silanus, whom she had put to death. These were his crimes, for which Agrippina had him poisoned, and was consequently delivered from her apprehensions.

Narcissus was the second person condemned. Agrippina hated him mortally, because she had always found in him a fidelity, that neither her threats nor her promises had ever been able to corrupt: a very scarce virtue, in an age when perfidiousness and treason never went unrewarded. Accordingly, as soon as Claudius was dead, Narcissus was arrested and kept in close confinement, where he languished in such extreme misery, that he was forced to put an end to his own life, though Nero had desired that he should be spared. A memorable example of the viscissitudes of fortune, who smiles only upon

¹Tacit. Ann. 13. c. 1.

us for a time in order to humble and mortify us more cruelly afterwards: or rather, a terrible lesson for those bloodsuckers, who drain the people by their extortions, and who are permitted by divine Providence to fall into their original poverty! It is certain, that Narcissus did not deserve a more happy end; and it was but just ¹ that he should die in poverty and misery, who had acquired immense riches by robbing the whole world, and who, by one continued series of rapine and extortion, had heaped up more riches than Cræsus and the kings of Persia.²

Agrippina had promised her resentment a great many more sacrifices, but Burrus and Seneca did not always approve of these violent measures, but opposed them as much as was in their power. They were Nero's tutors, and had an equal authority; and though they were of different characters (Burrus being severe and Seneca very mild) yet they were good friends, and acted in concert to infuse good notions into his mind, and put some check upon the Empress's ambitious career. Pallas was Agrippina's prime minister, who influenced her in all sorts of affairs; and he who had so much abused the absolute power that he had assumed in Claudius's reign, aspired to the same degree of authority under Nero; but this prince was not of a temper to be treated in such a manner by one that had been a slave, and who was insupportable to him from the arrogance and severity he affected; besides, Burrus and Seneca could not bear that anybody should claim to govern the Emperor but themselves. They looked upon the lessons that other people

¹ Dio. lib. 60. Sueton. vit. Claud.

² Juvenal. Sat. 14.

presumed to give him as an attack upon their privilege, for which reason they omitted nothing that could give Nero a bad opinion of him, and also resolved to humble the Empress, and to mortify upon every occasion as much as possible the woman who, in the name of her son, governed the Empire absolutely.

The first opportunity they had of doing this was the audience which Nero gave to the Armenian ambassadors, who were come to Rome, to discuss certain affairs of their country. The day being come when this ceremony was to take place,¹ Nero was seated on his throne for that purpose; and Agrippina, who looked upon her son's elevation as a work of her contrivance, expected precedence everywhere as formerly, and intended to sit upon the same throne with the Emperor. It would certainly have been a strange and unheard-of thing, if a woman had presided upon so remarkable and solemn an occasion; and the ambassadors, who had the highest idea of the majesty and grandeur of the Roman Empire, could not have been witnesses of the despicable state of slavery to which the people were reduced, without abating very much of the respect they had for the Romans, and forming notions very different from those they had conceived. Nero himself, whatever deference he had at that time for his mother, did not approve of this innovation. In the meantime, Agrippina advanced and nobody said a word: but Seneca,² seeing the scandal that the Empress's pride would bring upon the Roman Empire, advised Nero to come down from the throne, as if it were to receive his mother and do her honour: Nero did so, and, paying

¹ Xiphilin. in Ner.

² Tacit. Ann. 13.

her a great many compliments, found some pretence to put off the audience to another day.

Burrus and Seneca, after this attempt of Agrippina's, no longer doubted that she intended to govern the Empire; they therefore united themselves more closely together against her, and determined to take such measures as should put a stop to her career; but they did not exhibit good judgment, for they tolerated an amour that Nero was carrying on¹ with Acte, who had been a slave, in order to set this girl in opposition to the haughty proceedings of the Empress, and by this ill-judged complaisance, they caused a disastrous result, for Nero was so captivated with her charms, that nothing would serve him but marrying her, thereby trampling under foot all manner of order and decency.

Agrippina felt that her influence and interest were very much weakened by the favour this girl enjoyed; and not being able to bear that her power should be diminished by a miserable concubine, broke out into the utmost fury and rage against her son, which had not the effects she had hoped; for, instead of lessening his affection for Acte, it inflamed him the more; and, because Agrippina became every day more jealous in proportion to her son's attachment to Acte, she carried her resentment so far as to make use of the most abusive language to the Emperor, which exasperated him to that degree, that he quite lost all respect for her; and, that he might render her odious to the people,² he pretended to have a mind to quit the Empire, and retire to Rhodes, where he said he could be quiet. The quarrel between Nero

¹ Dio. lib. 61.

² Sueton. vit. Ner.

and Agrippina ¹ furnished matter of laughter and mirth to all Rome; for, in their wrath, they reproached each other with certain truths that ought not to have been mentioned, but with which the public was perfectly acquainted.

As Nero, however, considered that for many reasons it was incumbent on him to be upon tolerable terms with his mother; he pretended to have nothing more to say to Acte, and when he designed to make her any presents, he desired his favourite Srenus to give them as from himself. Agrippina, who was continually upon the watch as to her son's conduct, was so far deceived that she took this change in his behaviour to be owing to his repentance, or the effect of a dislike he had taken to his mistress; and, that she might cure him entirely of his passion for her, did not spare either caresses or the most shameful complaisance. She went further still, for, laying aside her usual pride and haughtiness, she condemned her past conduct, and to show her son that she was determined to live with him for the future upon friendly terms, she offered to serve him herself in his pleasures and intrigues. But the Emperor, who could not trust to her fair promises, was always upon his guard against them, and knew that some deep design lay at the bottom; so that, though he strove all he could to disguise his real sentiments, it was not possible for him to wear a mask continually, but now and then the truth would break out; and Agrippina, who had a great deal of penetration, soon perceived it, and could not forbear complaining. This revived their first disagreement, and the breach became wider than ever.

¹ Tacit. Ann. Dio. lib. 61.

Agrippina was the first who caused it to break out; for, Nero having sent her one day the most precious and costly furniture of the palace, as well as the magnificent robes and jewels that had belonged to the preceding Empresses, she looked upon it as a great affront, and said with an air of haughtiness and contempt, that she did not accept these things as a gift, but as a small portion of what he had received from her, since in reality he was beholden to her for everything he possessed.¹ These words were soon reported to Nero, and even represented worse than they really were. He was offended in the highest degree, and by way of being revenged, without directly attacking his mother, he dismissed Pallas from his office of treasurer.

This disgrace of this favourite of Agrippina (with whom she had a most intimate and shameful intercourse) wrought her up to the greatest pitch of rage and fury, so that she no longer kept any bounds. Nothing was to be heard but bitter complaints, which she thundered out continually in the palace, and threatened Nero that she would cause Britannicus to be brought into the camp and shown to the legions as lawful heir to Claudius, and then declared Emperor. She protested that she would reveal to the whole world the wicked means that had been made use of to place upon the throne her husband's adopted son, to the prejudice of him whose right it was; that she was well assured the troops would have more regard for Germanicus's daughter, than for Burrus, that man of yesterday, or Seneca, that infamous and venal wretch who had been banished, and who intended to usurp the government between them. After these

¹ Tacit. Ann. 13.

threats, she poured forth against Nero all the insulting and provoking language she could think of; she took it into her head to invoke the deified Claudius, and the ghost of Silanus; and, suffering herself to be transported with fury beyond all bounds, she laid hold upon the Emperor, and could scarcely keep from striking him.

Nero had never been in so much perplexity before. He was alarmed at the terrible threats of his mother, with whose temper he was too well acquainted to doubt whether she was capable of being as good as her word; he reflected upon all that she had said of Britannicus, who was already old enough to be very formidable, and to be well enough acquainted with his right to the throne which he had been robbed of. In fact, that young prince had given people to understand, that he was by no means ignorant of his claims,¹ for, as he and his companions were one day diverting themselves at a game in which a king was to be chosen to command the rest, when the lot had fallen upon Nero, he commanded Britannicus to sing a song, with a design of turning him into ridicule. Britannicus obeyed immediately and sang one much to the point, in which he said that by treasonable practices they had deprived him of his father's throne. This song, which seemed as if it had been premeditated, moved all the company, and particularly disconcerted Nero so much that, not doubting that Britannicus would soon carry these considerations much further, he resolved to put this dangerous rival out of the way.

Nero had another reason (such as it was) for being jealous of Britannicus,² which was as weak and unjust as it was ridiculous. The latter happened unfortunately

¹ Tacit. Ann. 13. c. 15.

² Sueton. vit. Ner.

to have a very good voice; and Nero, who must needs pass for the best singer in the world, could not bear to be outdone by Britannicus; so this poor young prince, having become odious to the Emperor by his merit and nearness to the throne, was poisoned.

Agrippina (to do her justice) was never suspected of having had any hand in this horrid crime. The astonishment she was struck with, and the terror that seized her when Britannicus dropped down dead suddenly, sufficiently justified her in that respect; and, to say the truth, she had but too much reason for her apprehensions; for, in losing Britannicus, she lost her best support, and the only person by whose means she hoped to maintain her authority, which was already declining.

Being destitute of this resource, she thought it expedient to show favour to such people as she hoped had any friendship for her, and to enter into private cabals with them. She was very affable to the captains, centurions, and all such as had any influence or authority, as if she had determined to make herself the head of a party, and become formidable to Nero; but he, who no longer kept any restraint in regard to her, soon penetrated her designs; and, in order to render them abortive, deprived her of the usual guard that had always attended her, as mother and wife of the Emperor. He caused her to be lodged in Antonia's house, where he visited her but very seldom, and always with a considerable escort. He carried his severity further still, for he obliged her to quit Rome,¹ and gave her a very indifferent house outside the city, whither he sent people

¹Sueton. vit. Ner. 24.

on purpose to insult her brutally, and who affronted her in every shape they could think.

From this moment the scene was quite changed with Agrippina;¹ all her grandeur vanished; her influence and authority sank to nothing. This idol, that had been worshipped by all the world, received no more homage or flattery; there did not remain the least trace of her dignity and magnificence, nor the least shadow of that extravagant power, which she had exercised with so much pride and haughtiness; and this Empress, before whom every knee had formerly bent, was all on a sudden so utterly abandoned, that of the innumerable crowd of adorers,² who a little before had worshipped at her shrine, none came near her but a few women, who visited her much less from friendship than a desire to hear her complaints, to observe maliciously the minutest of her actions, and to keep a sort of register of every word that escaped her, in order to report them afterwards to Nero. Thus it frequently happens, that people's affections alter as fortune changes, and examples are very numerous of those turning most against us, who in our prosperity seemed our greatest friends. Agrippina sadly experienced the truth of this, for Silana, who had been her most intimate friend, was the most forward to persecute her, and caused her to be accused by Paris of having a design to seize the Empire. It is true that Silana had reason to be not over fond of Agrippina, but she did not succeed in her revenge as she expected.

Silana was a lady of illustrious family and very handsome, but her beauty was of that sort in which might be perceived a good deal of studied affectation; and besides

¹ Dio. lib. 60.

² Tacit. Ann. 13.

this, she was very rich. There was a great intimacy between Agrippina and her, which the former cultivated as much as possible, because, Silana having no children, the Empress was in hopes of coming in for a good share of her large possessions. All Agrippina's pretended love and kindness were founded upon these interested views; for it plainly appeared, notwithstanding her dissimulation, that she loved the lady's estates more than her person; for Sextus Africanus, a Roman knight, being resolved to marry this lady, Agrippina, who saw that all her hopes would be destroyed and her greed disappointed by this marriage, did her utmost to hinder it; sometimes by giving Africanus a very bad character of the lady, and arousing suspicions in him with regard to her reputation. Sometimes, again, she would insinuate, that it would be ridiculous for a young man like him to marry a woman so much older than himself, whose beauty was much upon the decline. In short, she made use of so many methods to give him a bad opinion of his mistress, that he no longer felt any affection for her.

The lady presently discovered that this change in her lover was owing to Agrippina's good offices, which she resented so much, that she eagerly seized the opportunity of avenging her disgrace; and, in order to compass her design with the less danger, she employed two of her confidantes to persuade Paris, the comedian, to be her accuser. Paris could not choose but acquit himself well in acting a part so conformable to his profession. He went to Nero one night when he was indulging in dissipation, and appearing before him with a melancholy countenance, which seemed to denote the greatness of the

danger he came to inform him of, told him, sighing, that he had discovered the most deep laid conspiracy against him, and that the author of it was no other than his own mother, who, not being able to endure that any person should reign but herself, had entered into a solemn compact with Rubellius Plautus, whom she was to marry and make Emperor; and by this marriage the government of the Empire was to be vested in her; that what chiefly induced her to select Plautus for carrying out this ambitious project was his high birth, he being great grandson of Augustus, for he did not doubt that that consideration would gain him a prodigious number of friends. This news terrified Nero to such a degree, that he had a great mind to put both his mother and Plautus to death on the spot; but Burrus, whose advice was always listened to, moderated the violence of his temper, by representing to him that, a criminal, however guilty, ought always to be heard, and especially a mother; that Agrippina had but one accuser, who laid a crime to her charge that was hardly credible; that this story, coming from such a person as a comedian, was not to be taken for granted; and in short, that so rash and hasty a resolution, formed in the night, and in the midst of a debauch, could not but be much blamed by all the world. He added, that he did not take upon him to vindicate Agrippina, but on the contrary, if upon a strict examination it should prove true, he would not scruple himself to be both her judge and executioner.

Nero yielded to these arguments, and sent Burrus the next morning to his mother, accompanied by Seneca and some others, to be witnesses of what she should say in her defence. Burrus interrogated the Empress as to

the crime she was accused of,¹ and affected a certain threatening air, that would have much disconcerted anybody but herself. But Agrippina did not upon this occasion forget either her courage or her pride. She answered him with a disdainful sort of contempt, that she was not at all surprised that Silana, who had never had a child, should be ignorant of the maternal tenderness a mother has for her offspring; but that she would have her know that it was not so easy for a mother to destroy her son, as it was for a courtesan to change her lovers; that her enemies, she supposed, by suborning the infamous Atimetus and a vile comedian against her, had a mind to entertain people with a farce; that an accusation brought by such wretches ought to be of no weight; and that she defied her bitterest enemy to produce one witness, worthy of credit, to prove that she had ever solicited the cohorts of the town, or endeavoured to corrupt the provinces, or tampered with the slaves or freedmen to induce them to revolt against her son. She then showed that the crime she was accused of was absolutely inconsistent with her own interest, because, if Britannicus was Emperor, she might flatter herself with the hopes of living out of danger, which she could never do if Plautus or any other had the sovereign command; because she would never, in that case, want enemies to accuse her of such crimes as would admit of no pardon except from a son to a mother.

The Empress's manner of justifying herself greatly affected those that were present. They did all they could to appease her; but she insisted upon speaking to her son, and accordingly was brought before him. She disdained

¹ Tacit. Ann. 13.

to say a word in her defence, thinking it inconsistent with her dignity to clear up or contradict all the falsehoods and calumnies that had been alleged against her. She also affected to be quite silent as to the favours she had heaped upon him, that she might not seem to reproach him with them, but peremptorily demanded that he should punish her adversaries for their malice, and enable her to reward her friends. Both demands were granted. Silana was banished, Atimetus, one of her accusers, was put to death, and the employments of chief commissary of provinces, the government of Egypt, and other important posts, were bestowed upon the Empress's friends.

Agrippina, having thus dexterously made use of the artifice that her enemies had employed to ruin her to re-establish her authority, left nothing undone that could confirm it; but the laws of modesty will not permit us to state the means she employed for that purpose. As she perceived her influence was diminished by that of Sabina Poppæa, with whom Nero at that time began to be enamoured, she made use of all her charms in order to oppose them to those of Poppæa; for she knew that her son was very susceptible to love, and that he stuck at nothing, when the question was to gratify his inclinations. She therefore formed the detestable resolution of exerting her utmost endeavours to create in her son such sentiments as are shocking to nature, by making him all the seductive and shameful advances in her power, hoping that by means of these infamous caresses she might be able to erase from his mind those feelings of regard he was beginning to conceive for Poppæa. Sometimes she

would go to him when he was elated with wine ¹ and took care to make her appearance in such a dress as was most capable of exciting desire. At other times she affected to display her beauty before him, with the same assurance and impudence that a courtesan practises before a gallant. When she went with him in his litter,² she caressed him in the most shameful manner, to tempt him to commit abomination with her; nor was there wanting evident demonstration that these incestuous flames of Agrippina met with a suitable return in Nero.

She did not however by this crime reap all the satisfaction she hoped for, because Nero was soon disgusted with it, and gave himself up entirely to his passion for Poppæa, which tormented the Empress with the most cruel jealousy. Poppæa, on her side, was not idle, but, taking advantage of the favourable sentiments the Emperor exhibited towards her, never ceased ³ to irritate him against his mother, by telling him that she could not endure that anybody should govern but herself; that any power superior to her own gave her offence, and consequently, that he ought to be always suspicious of such unbounded ambition, for that the Empress would omit nothing to get rid of those who presumed to put themselves into rivalry with her. Nero, therefore, who of himself was sufficiently inclined to believe everything that was bad of his mother, gave credit to all this, and resolved to put to death her who had given him life and the Empire, and to deliver himself at once from one whom he no longer looked upon but as the declared

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14. c. 2.

² Xiph. in. Ner. Dio. lib. 61.

³ Sueton. vit. Ner. 28. Aurel. Vict.

enemy to his pleasures, and the only obstacle to his happiness.

He had designed this long ago, and nothing troubled him but how to remove from himself the suspicion of it; for this reason he would not have recourse to any violent means, because that would have made too much noise. He tried several times to poison her,¹ and, in particular at an entertainment,² which, by agreement between him and Otho, the latter gave to the Emperor and his mother, at which there was no want of magnificence, gallantry, and good cheer, to take away from Agrippina all mistrust by these false tokens of friendship and respect. But these attempts were always in vain, because the Empress was always upon her guard against any snares of that sort that her son might lay for her, and had provided the most powerful antidotes, which she never failed to make use of as often as she thought there was occasion; this decided the Emperor to despatch her at all hazards.

It is reported that Seneca did not endeavour to dissuade³ him from this horrible design, though this is scarcely credible. It is even affirmed that the philosopher, perceiving that his lessons produced no fruit, but that the devilish inclinations of Nero were infinitely stronger than all his maxims, encouraged him to commit this parricide, which he was already guilty of in his heart, that so execrable a crime might draw down upon him the hatred of the gods and men. Be it as it may, Nero, having fortified his mind against all that could happen,

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

² Sueton. vit. Othon.

³ Xiphilin. in. Ner.

thought of nothing but how to bring it about. At first¹ he had recourse to a plank so contrived, that it was to fall upon her in the night and crush her to pieces; but this design having been discovered, Anicetus, one of his freedmen, who had looked after him when he was a child (a person fertile in expedients of this nature), offered to find out a method of putting her to death, without suspicion falling upon anyone. He was then commander of the galleys in the port of Misenum, and hated Agrippina as much as she did him. Nero did not believe he could possibly find out a fitter man for his purpose than this infamous officer, who was capable of any wicked action. In fact, he undertook to have a galley made in such a manner that the bottom should open, and, at the same moment, the upper part should fall of itself, so that Agrippina could not fail to be either crushed to death or drowned, without giving the least room for suspicion, since it would pass for one of these unfortunate accidents that happen frequently at sea. The Emperor was to carry out the farce, by erecting temples to his mother's memory, which were to be looked upon as undeniable demonstrations of his grief, respect, and affection, and would infallibly remove all grounds of suspicion.

Nero approved of this scheme; and, the better to put it into execution, it was resolved that it should be done at Baïæ,² in the Campagna of Rome, when the feast of

¹ Sueton. Vit. Ner. Tacit. Ann. 14. Dio. lib. 62.

² Baïæ was a very agreeable town in the Campagna of Rome. There were hot baths, to which people resorted as much for pleasure as health. The country about it was extremely fertile, and the neighbourhood of the town abounded with magnificent palaces, and delicious

Minerva was to be celebrated. The ceremony served Nero for a pretence to leave Rome, and he invited his mother to be of the party. He was already reconciled to her in appearance, and pretended to be very sorry he had ever failed in point of respect to her. He blamed his past conduct, and protested that for the future she should never have the least reason to complain of him, for he said it was only reasonable that children should bear with the humours of their parents, to whom they owed their life and being. Thus this unnatural and cruel prince disguised the most horrible perfidiousness that could enter into the heart of man, under the specious show of filial tenderness and affection. He was persuaded that his mother would the more easily fall into this snare, as women are always apt to believe what they ardently desire. The plot being thus laid, and all his measures taken, Nero left Rome, together with his mother, in a galley, which they had taken care to adorn magnificently. They arrived at Antium, where the Emperor left Agrippina, and proceeded to Baiæ. After having passed a few days there, he wrote his mother a letter full of kindness and respect, and entreated her to come and pass some time with him. She parted from Antium and landed at Bauli, a pleasant country-house between Misenum and Baiæ, by the sea-side. Nero was there ready to receive her, conducted her to the castle that she might rest herself, and then returned to Baiæ.

gardens, so that the Romans used to flock thither in great numbers. Horace in one of his poems sets forth its praises,

Nullus in orbe locus Baiis præluet amœnis.

Martial says also, that Baiæ surpasses all description,

Laudabo digne, non satis tamen Baias.

This town was destroyed by earthquakes.

Notwithstanding all the precautions that were taken to keep this matter secret, Agrippina was informed of it; somebody had informed her of the plot against her, and she was at a loss what to believe. In this state of uncertainty she would not venture herself at sea again, but was carried to Baïæ in a chair. She was there received by her son with all possible demonstrations of tenderness and affection, and treated in the most sumptuous manner. The Emperor, to remove all grounds of suspicion, even consulted her about some serious affairs, granted her several favours without her asking them, invented all sorts of amusements for her, and made her always sit above him, which mark of respect pleased her infinitely.

This extraordinary fit of good humour in the Emperor deceived Agrippina. She took this cunning outside appearance for true affection and duty, for never was artifice better carried out. When Agrippina was to return to Bauli, Nero embraced her in the kindest and most affectionate manner imaginable, whether in order to conceal his design the better, or because nature was working for the last time upon the heart of this barbarian; he escorted her to the sea-side, and the galley in which she had come being damaged as by accident (though by Nero's secret orders) he desired her to embark on board of that which Anicetus had prepared, commanding that officer to escort, or rather to destroy her.

The weather was as fine and the sea as calm as possible,¹ as if Providence had so ordered it, that Nero might have no excuse for his crime, nor attribute his mother's misfortune to the darkness of the night or a

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

tempestuous sea. Agrippina had none of her retinue with her but Crepereius Gallus, who stood under the helm, and a lady named Acerronia Polla, who sat at the Empress's feet, and was congratulating her on the happy reconciliation between her and the Emperor. The galley had proceeded but a little way, when, at a signal given by Anicetus, the floor of the cabin where Agrippina was, being loaded with lead, gave way. Crepereius was crushed to pieces by it,¹ and consequently died upon the spot; but the place, where Agrippina was, held out some time longer, because that part of the floor was too strong to yield immediately under the weight. The confusion that this occasioned was so great, that the sailors who were in the plot were vexed beyond measure at the disappointment, and did not know what to do. The springs, which were to occasion the opening of the vessel at the instant when the floor was to fall, did not perform their office, because the sailors who were not in the secret hindered the others in such a manner that, in order to sink the galley, they were forced to overset her; but this was not to be done without great difficulty, because those who were innocent undid all that the others performed, by working in the opposite direction.

During this terrible fright and hurry, Agrippina and Acerronia fell into the sea. Acerronia, who suspected no treason, called out for help; and, that it might come as speedily as possible, never ceased bawling that they should save the Empress-mother. This zeal for Agrippina was the cause of Acerronia's death, for, as it was their intention to murder the Empress, they dashed

¹ Dio. lib. 62. Sueton. vit. Ner.

Acerronia's brains out with their oars, taking her for Agrippina.

The Empress, on the contrary, said not a word, but had the good fortune to keep herself above water till she was assisted by some boats that were at a little distance, and received no other damage than a blow on the shoulder. She was immediately carried to a neighbouring house, not far from where Nero was, and as soon as she had a little recovered from her fright and fatigue, Acerronia's being knocked on the head, the pains the sailors took to wreck the galley and many other circumstances crowded into her mind, and overwhelmed her with melancholy reflections.

She had too much penetration not to see into this mystery, and soon came to the conclusion that the affair did not look like chance or accident; but, on the other hand, she was too politic not to pretend that she had no manner of suspicion. She immediately sent off her freedman Agerinus, to inform Nero of the risk she had run and the escape she had had, and to desire him not to take the trouble of coming to see her, since in her present condition she required nothing but rest. Her avarice, however, did not forsake her in the midst of her terrors and apprehensions, for she caused Acerronia's last will to be looked for, and sealed up all her effects very carefully; in this she did not in the least dissemble.

Nero had waited with the utmost impatience for the conclusion of this business, and was in the greatest uneasiness and perplexity, when he heard that his mother was saved, which he did not at all expect, for he thought the matter had been too well contrived to fail; and perceiving, by what was reported to him, that she could be in

no sort of doubt but that it was a designed thing, he was afraid that she would certainly stir up against him the senate, the army, the people, and even the slaves. In this dilemma he sent for Burrus and Seneca, to tell them his opinion, and to consult them as to what was fit to be done.

They continued some time silent, but at last Seneca, who generally spoke first, looked at Burrus, as if it were to learn his sentiments, whether it would not be right that soldiers should be commanded to go and kill her. Burrus answered, that the prætorian guards had too much respect for Cæsar's family and the memory of Germanicus, to do any such thing; but that it was Anicetus's business to finish what he had undertaken. Anicetus did not require to be long entreated, but undertook the business very willingly; and Nero, in the transports of joy that he felt upon this occasion (having found a man ready to oblige him so greatly) cried out, that at last he might say he was really Emperor, and would always acknowledge himself beholden to Anicetus for it.

Just then a messenger came in to tell Nero that the Empress had sent Agerinus to him, who prayed to be admitted; he was brought in, and while he was speaking, a poniard was slyly conveyed between his feet, to make it be believed that he had brought it under his robe, and dropped it by chance. The Emperor sent him immediately to prison, as if he had come to assassinate him, and this rumour was industriously reported, that when the death of Agrippina should be known, people might imagine she had killed herself from vexation that she had missed the opportunity of destroying her son.

While all this was passing at Baiæ, the noise of the

accident that had happened to the Empress was spread about the country, as a misfortune that had happened merely by chance; and the people flocked ¹ from all parts of the sea-side, to give what assistance was in their power. Some threw themselves into the first boats they could meet with, others waded into the water as far as they were able, and great numbers, holding up their hands towards heaven, made the air echo with their cries and supplications for the Empress's safety. Multitudes came with torches to enquire if she was safe, and as soon as they knew that she was so, and had retired, they all hastened to see her, and to congratulate her on her escape, returning thanks to the gods for having saved her from so terrible and surprising an accident.

Agrippina, however, could not help being in a cruel state of uneasiness; the dread she was in of the misfortunes that threatened her put her in a miserable condition. No kind message came from her son to cheer her heart, nor did Agerinus, whom she had sent, return to give her any comfort, so that she had a secret presentiment that her fatal hour was approaching. At last Anicetus came in, accompanied by soldiers, at the sight of whom all the company were terrified. The soldiers, by order of their chief, surrounded the house, and after having broken open the outward door, and seized upon all the domestics that he could find, Anicetus came to the chamber whither the Empress had retired; the room had not much light in it, and the Empress had nobody with her but one of her women, who, hearing the noise that the soldiers made, was seized with a panic and fled, as most of the rest had done; then the unfortunate

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

Agrippina, seeing herself abandoned by all the world, said to her woman as she was going, "What! dost thou quit me too?" Anicetus was the first that came in, attended by two officers of the marines, and as soon as Agrippina perceived him, she told him with a great deal of resolution, that, if he came to see her, she begged he would go and tell Nero that she was better; but, if he had any design upon her life, she could not believe that her son had any hand in it, or was capable of commanding a parricide like this. These words did not in the least move the ruffians; for, while she was speaking, they surrounded her bed, and one of the officers who came with Anicetus, and was not less brutal than he, gave her a violent blow on the head¹ with a stick, and a centurion immediately drew his sword to kill her; then Agrippina, who could no longer doubt but her son was the author of her death, presented herself to the murderers, and told them they should begin by piercing that belly that had produced such a monster as Nero; and that instant she was run through the body in several places.

Nero's unnatural barbarity was not yet satisfied; for, after having murdered his mother, he added insults that were rather more cruel than the former action. When he was sure she was dead, he had the abominable curiosity to see her body quite naked, and brutally point out her faults and perfections; and then, with a smiling and pleased countenance, turned round to those about him, and told them, in a jocose manner, that he did not think he had so beautiful a mother. Some there are who deny this, but when we consider his character in general, and especially that he kept a concubine a great while, merely

¹ Dio. Tacit. Sueton.

because she happened to resemble his mother,¹ without much difficulty we may believe him capable of it.

This detestable Emperor did not peaceably enjoy the fruits of this horrid murder; for, though the sovereign authority with which he was invested, and which he so much abused, screened him against human justice, it could not protect him against the divine vengeance, from which nobody can hide themselves. He was tormented with the intolerable pangs of conscience,² which gave him no rest day or night. He was frequently heard to cry out, that the ghost of Agrippina pursued him wherever he went, and that furies and devils surrounded him. He sought to hide himself in dark and desolate places, and immediately after, was impatient to quit them. Thus, those places where he hoped to find most rest and quiet only served to fill his mind with horror, dread and despair, the just reward of his crimes.

¹ Xiphilin. in Ner.

² Tacit. Ann. 14. c. 10. Dio. lib. 61.

OCTAVIA

WIFE OF NERO



NE would imagine it was decreed, that from Messalina and Claudius nothing good was to be expected; and that what Domitius Ahenobarbus had foretold of his own marriage with Agrippina might justly be said of them. Claudius¹ was a dull, stupid prince, nearer of kin to a beast than a man (as Seneca observes), and Messalina a woman quite destitute of decency or modesty. Notwithstanding which, Octavia, whose wisdom, prudence, and virtue were as remarkable as her high birth, was the offspring of that union which promised so little benefit to mankind. She was eminently good in a most wicked and depraved age, and in a corrupt court where vice reigned triumphant. Her conduct was always irreproachable, and the bad example of her mother failed to corrupt her. To her beauty, which was incomparable, was united that noble simplicity and amiable modesty, that never fails to captivate the hearts of all who are witnesses of it. She had the greatest sweetness of temper, without the least tincture of affectation. In short, she possessed all those virtues and good qualities that were worthy of a better reign. Never did princess more deserve to be happy, and yet² there never was any who

¹Lud. in Claud.

²Senec. in Octav.

suffered more, nor whose patience was more put to the test; for she did not know what it was to enjoy one quiet day, nor could her whole life be reckoned anything but one continued series of bitterness and vexation; so that it may truly be affirmed of Octavia, that she died without ever having tasted the least pleasure.

She was but very young when the Emperor, her father, thought of finding out a suitable husband for her; and of all the men of distinction and high quality at Rome, who might have aspired to that extraordinary honour, Lucius Silanus was thought the most worthy. He was remarkable for his illustrious birth and great merit, being great grandson¹ to Augustus; but these, advantageous and honourable as they were, did not recommend him to the love and esteem of all mankind so much as the virtues he was endued with. He had the sweetest temper, together with the most beneficent disposition, a noble air, a mind well formed, and a great soul; there was nothing, in short, that one would have wished to have altered in his whole person or conduct. The Emperor had the greatest regard for him, and therefore made choice of him for his son-in-law; in consequence of which, he was solemnly betrothed to Octavia, and, in order to render him more worthy of her, the Emperor granted him² several marks of honour that had never been given³ except to those who had triumphed, together with several other privileges, that made him very important at Rome, where all those that were descended from the Cæsars were respected in an extraordinary manner.

This marriage would certainly have been brought

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12. c. 3.

² Sueton. vit. Claud. 27.

³ Tacit. Ann. 13. c. 1.

about if Messalina had lived a little longer, but her immodesty and cruelty had occasioned her being put to death; and Agrippina, the proudest and most ambitious of women, being substituted in her place, prevailed upon the Emperor to take other resolutions more conformable to her views. This Empress, whose love of power and authority was boundless, only married her uncle Claudius with a design to ruin his family, and cause the Empire to come into her own. This was the aim of all her grand schemes. She considered that, if Nero her son married the Emperor's daughter, it would be a great step towards the throne; and, to bring about his marriage, she had nothing to do but break off that which was agreed upon between Silanus and Octavia. To this end it was necessary to prove Silanus guilty of some crime that would make him unworthy of being so nearly allied to the Emperor.

Vitellius, who was censor at that time, undertook this infamous commission. This unworthy magistrate (who by art as well as nature¹ was perfectly well qualified for insinuating himself into the good graces of people in authority) was ever ready to advance his fortune at the expense of his honour and integrity. He thought he could not possibly do Agrippina a greater piece of service than by ruining Silanus, whom she hated; and in order to succeed, he had recourse to falsehood and imposture. He accused him of imaginary crimes, since he could lay no real ones to his charge. At first he very cunningly spread reports that were calculated to tarnish his character and reputation, and which Agrippina's emissaries took care to propagate and encourage. He himself also,

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12. c. 4.

as censor, reproached him with too great an intimacy with his sister Junia; pretexts were found for this infamous aspersion, and it was asserted that Silanus's love and affection for his sister ought to be construed in a criminal sense. Upon this false accusation, which was without the least proof, the corrupt censor declared him unworthy to hold his offices, so that Silanus, who was prætor, and performed the functions of his office with the greatest honour and integrity, found his name expunged from the list of senators, and was obliged to resign the prætorship without knowing for what reason.

Claudius suffered himself to be imposed upon by this artful accusation; and the more easily because, as he loved his daughter extremely, he would not give her a husband who had fixed his affections elsewhere; he therefore broke off the intended marriage between Silanus and Octavia;¹ and the pretended criminal, knowing full well that his enemies would not stop there, and that Agrippina, whose deep designs he easily penetrated, would never be satisfied until she was revenged on a man who stood between her and her ambitious projects, either in despair, or being compelled to do so, killed himself, and thereby avoided the persecution that was preparing for him.

Nothing could have been a greater disappointment to Octavia than the breaking off of this marriage; for no sooner was it accomplished, than Agrippina set about promoting the other between her son Nero and Octavia, which she had so much at heart. Pollio, who was to be consul the next year, being gained over by Agrippina, proposed this matter to Claudius; and he, who never acted but according as he was influenced by other people,

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12. Senec. in Oct. Sueton. vit. Claud.

agreed to it at once; so they were betrothed, and Nero, by that means, paved himself a way to the throne. There were others who had a hand in this work besides Pollio; for all those who were concerned in Messalina's death favoured the advancement of Nero, for fear that, if Britannicus should become Emperor, he would revenge the death of his mother.

The success that Agrippina had hitherto met with in all her enterprises continually encouraged her to take up new ones; for, besides the absolute power she had acquired over her husband, whom she kept in a complete state of slavery, she had also the assistance of all that stupid Emperor's favourites, for he was entirely governed by them, and was by no means capable of penetrating the deep and ambitious designs of his wife, as it plainly appeared, when they so easily prevailed on him to adopt Nero. Pallas, who was attached to the Empress by a criminal intercourse, took upon himself the management of that piece of work, and it did not cost him much trouble to bring it about. The necessities of the State, the youth of Britannicus, the precarious state of health the Emperor was in, and the reasonableness of giving him an assistant upon that account, were the arguments he made use of to that purpose; to which he added the example of Augustus, who had adopted ¹ the son of his wife Livia. All these reasons convinced Claudius, that not a moment ought to be lost in so necessary a work; so Domitius (as he was always called before) was admitted into the family of Claudius, and named Nero, by an adoption that was without precedent in the patrician family of the Claudians.

¹ Tacit. Ann. 12.

This adoption, which put Nero on a level with Britannicus, was authorised by the senate (ever ready to subscribe to the Empress's will and pleasure) and ratified by the most fulsome and flattering decrees; but all honest well-meaning people disapproved of them in the highest degree, and commiserated a poor prince, whose interests were basely deserted, in order to build up the fortunes of a stranger upon his ruin. Heaven seemed to be provoked at this piece of injustice,¹ for the sky was all on fire the day it was done, as if to represent the character and violent temper of Nero, and it seemed to be a prediction of the flame that this wicked prince would one day kindle in Rome.

Octavia foresaw all the consequences of this unjust adoption, which caused her to shed many a bitter tear; she could not help bewailing the condition of a brother so soon to fall a victim to the ambition of a cruel step-mother, whose principal aim was the destruction of all her family. In fact, all the necessary preparations previous to this marriage of Nero and Octavia were at once made; and that there might remain no obstacle in the way,² the princess was taken into another family, by a similar adoption, that a brother might not appear to marry a sister.

The nuptials were celebrated with more precipitation than pomp, but Nero was full of joy and satisfaction; not that he cared for Octavia, but because it gave him a near prospect of the throne. Octavia, on the contrary, who was sacrificed to the ambition of Agrippina, was overwhelmed with melancholy. Agrippina's wishes were now accomplished; and having taken such measures as could

¹ Dio. lib. 60. Xiphilin. in Ner.

² Dio. lib. 61.

scarce fail of securing the Empire to her son, she then thought of nothing but how to strike the important blow that she had long meditated in her heart.

Claudius's imprudence hastened his own destruction; for one day at table he happened (when heated by wine, which was no rare occurrence) to say, that his marriages had been unfortunate, but that sooner or later he would find a way to be revenged on those who affronted him. This was enough for Agrippina, who thought it high time to prevent the effects of these threats. Locusta,¹ who was very skilful in the art of shortening life,² was immediately set to work; and Claudius, a few days after, having eaten some mushrooms, found the end of his life in that ragout, of which he was very fond. He was afterwards deified, and Nero was saluted Emperor, to the prejudice of Britannicus, who was the lawful heir.

It is easy to imagine what must have been Octavia's grief upon this occasion; for, young as she was,³ she knew both the cause and the author of the Emperor's death. But the art of dissembling is of very great use in courts. Octavia looked upon herself as a stranger in her father's palace, and was taught, by so many misfortunes, to conceal her true sentiments. She found it of the greatest importance to her to seem ignorant of many things, and had often occasion to put this in practice. As Nero only married her to make use of her as a stepping-stone to the throne, he never showed the least inclination for her; so, as soon as he was become Em-

¹ Locusta was a famous poisoner, who did great mischief in Rome, for which she had been put in prison, but Nero gave her her liberty, in order to make use of her for poisoning Prince Britannicus. The Emperor Galba put her to death.

² Tacit. Ann. 12. Sueton. vit. Claud. Dio. Eutrop.

³ Tacit. Ann. 13.

peror, he placed his affections elsewhere, and entirely despised and slighted his wife, whose chastity was universally acknowledged, and whose extraordinary beauty was the more admired, as she made use of no arts to heighten or set it off.

Acte was the first person who made an impression on his heart. He became excessively in love with her;¹ and this passion seemed to be authorised by the silence of his preceptors, who connived at it through a false policy, or rather approved of his debaucheries; alleging that it was better to allow of these criminal pleasures, than that the chastity and modesty of the Roman ladies should be violated by the impetuosity of this Emperor's lewd inclinations. But their true motive was, to make use of Acte by way of counterpoise to the power of Agrippina, imagining that their own authority would be more considerable as the Empress's decreased. Thus Nero, meeting with no opposition, gave himself up to the gratification of his appetites without the least reserve.

Some of his friends were very sensible of the ill-treatment Octavia received from him, and had sufficient honour and courage to tell him of it; but these remonstrances were in vain, and produced no good effects on a prince that was not always in a humour to listen to them, so they only served to increase rather than cure the evil; for Nero, who consulted nothing but his passions, answered brutally, that Octavia² ought to be content with the simple ornaments of a wife; and he would probably have divorced her then, if Burrus, his tutor, seeing how far he carried matters, had not told him, with a good

¹ Sueton. vit. Ner. Tacit. Ann. 13.

² Sueton. vit. Ner. Tacit. Dio.

deal of liberty and resolution, that if he must needs put away Octavia, he ought at least to give her back her portion, meaning by that, that he was obliged to her for the Empire.

If the Emperor's love for Acte had caused no other affliction to Octavia than the loss of his heart, she would never have given herself any trouble about the matter, for it gave her no sort of jealousy or uneasiness. She saw him, with great indifference, carrying on his detestable amours; and thought herself sufficiently revenged by the contempt that this unworthy Emperor brought upon himself, in yielding to the seductive caresses of a prostitute. But Acte set no great value on his affections; for it was his fortune, not his love, that she aimed at, and the throne was what she aspired to. Full of these flattering hopes, she employed all her charms to win Nero, and found him so susceptible, that she soon perceived she had all the qualities she could wish for that were necessary to promote her success; corruption of heart and manners, aversion to virtue, a natural propensity to vice, hatred for Octavia; everything, in short, seemed to favour this coquette in her ambitious designs.

Besides, Nero was plunged in the most infamous pleasures, and surrounded with debauched and effeminate youths, whose sentiments were as low as their birth, and from whom he could learn nothing but what was vile and base in the highest degree. Burrus and Seneca chose rather to keep at a distance and neglect their duty, when they saw their labour was to no purpose, and that their instructions were thrown away upon the depraved nature of their pupil, who despised their lessons and precepts. On the contrary, Otho, that well-known debauchee,

whom a resemblance of manners had recommended to the Emperor; Petronius, so clever in inventing pleasures, and chief manager of Nero's amusements; Crescens, a vile wretch that had been a slave; Vatinius, who, weary of struggling with poverty in a poor shoemaker's shop, where he had passed his younger days, had found out the secret of insinuating himself into the good graces of the Emperor, by the most shameful means, and in spite of the deformities of his body, which was crooked and disfigured; Tigellinus, who from the meanest extraction raised himself to the highest pitch of grandeur by all manner of wickedness; Anicetus, another freedman, who afterwards was the worthy instrument he made choice of when he put his mother to death; Pythagoras, to whom he caused himself to be solemnly married, to gratify his monstrous lewdness with detestable and newly-invented pleasures, being quite weary of such as were in the ordinary way; Sporus,¹ whom he had the folly to marry as a wife, after a ridiculous attempt to make him change his sex; Senecio, Serenus, and an infinite number of such like excrements of the Empire, were the worthy masters and patterns that Nero imitated and copied; so that, if he had not been naturally vicious, he could not but have become so by infection.

Among all these unworthy favourites and base flatterers, Senecio² was the person he chose for his confidant in his amour with Acte, because his inclinations were the most conformable to his own. This great familiarity was insupportable to Agrippina, who had often attempted to break through it, especially when she knew that Senecio favoured her son's intrigue with Acte, for

¹ Sueton. vit. Ner. 28.

² Tacit. Ann. 13.

she could not bear to have that courtesan put upon a level with her in point of authority; and Nero, who had not yet divested himself of all humanity, but pretended to keep some sort of restraint with his mother, quitted Senecio for a time, and made use of Serenus for his amour, who pretended to be in love with Acte himself, and publicly gave out that the presents Nero sent his mistress by him were his own. But these restraints did not long suit the inclinations of Nero, who was not of a temper to bear with such tedious and troublesome formalities: besides, it is no easy matter to conceal a violent passion so that it shall not break out some time or other. Thus Nero, being weary of dissembling, began to visit Acte with less reserve and circumspection, and soon after, without affecting secrecy at all, gave himself entirely up to Senecio, and despising the remonstrances and threats of his mother, resolved to marry Acte.

Two great obstacles stood in the way of this marriage; Octavia was to be divorced, and a woman who had been a slave was to be exalted to the throne of the Empire. The first would have been a flagrant injustice; and the second, a novelty that would have been thought monstrous. To put away Octavia could not but provoke the senate, and cause a revolt among the people, who perfectly adored the family of the Cæsars. To marry Acte would have been to despise all classes in the city, and infinitely to degrade the imperial majesty, by placing a slave on the throne. Nero's love, however, would soon have triumphed over all these difficulties, in spite of his preceptors' remonstrances, had it not been for his apprehension that the people's minds would be so alienated from him by this marriage as to incline them towards the

young prince Britannicus, whom he thought already but too formidable. These considerations were what stopped his career. He had invented reasons (such as they were) for putting away Octavia, and gave himself but little trouble about getting them approved of by the senate; for he had absolute control over those timid and slavish persons of whom it was composed, who, sacrificing their duty and honour to the advancement of their fortune, conformed themselves entirely to Nero's will, or rather to all his crimes, not being ashamed of dishonouring their character by most servile and mercenary complaisance. Acte's obscure birth was not an insurmountable obstacle; for Nero had resolved to make it appear that she was of royal extraction; and for this purpose two persons¹ of rank, who had been consuls, had promised, by a shameful condescension, to swear that she had kings for her ancestors. This fabulous genealogy was to have put her, whose father had been a miserable slave, upon an equality with the noblest lady in Rome. And Nero, to authorise this pretended royalty of his mistress, adopted her into the family of Attalus king of Pergamus in Asia, who was possessed of immense riches, and, dying without children, left the Roman people his heirs; thus, everything was arranged for the celebration of this marriage, when, making the reflections which have been already mentioned, he bethought himself that, before he should venture to make such an experiment as might not be approved of by all the world, it behooved him to get rid of Britannicus, who was able to form a powerful party against him, as his pretensions to the throne were universally acknowledged.² This young

¹ Sueton. vit. Ner. Xiphilin.

² Tacit. Ann. 12.

prince, who was in the fifteenth year of his age, was by no means to be despised, both on account of his personal merit, as also of that affection which subjects always have for their lawful prince; besides that, Agrippina, who had fallen out with Nero, was continually threatening him with her intention of carrying Britannicus into the camp, of disclosing to all the world the iniquitous proceedings that had been carried on, her incestuous marriage, the unjust and violent death of Silanus, the murder of Claudius; and in short, declared that she would let all the earth know that Nero only governed the Empire on commission, and that it was high time to restore it to the son of Claudius, who was the true and lawful heir.

Nero did not relish these terrible threats, which made a deep impression on him; he could not help being prodigiously alarmed, and from that time forth looked upon Britannicus as his greatest enemy. He therefore determined to cut him off by poison, not daring to use any violent methods. Pollio, tribune of a prætorian cohort, (a man destitute of honour) was the infamous instrument this detestable prince made use of to take away the life of Britannicus, son of his Emperor, his benefactor, his colleague, his brother-in-law, and his brother by adoption. Locusta, a famous poisoner by trade, (who, as an historian says, was for a long time one of the principal springs of the government) was employed upon this occasion. She¹ was at that time in prison, under the guard of Pollio, for exercising her profession a little too freely at the expense of a great many people's lives; and her liberty was promised her, provided she did the business effectually. These terms were immediately accepted,

¹Tacit. Ann. 12. Sueton.

and she prepared a poison for Britannicus, which was given him by his own preceptors, but it did not take effect, either because it was made up too mild, for fear that, if it operated too powerfully, there might be room for suspicion; or perhaps because the prince might have been speedily delivered of it by a natural evacuation. Nero, who did not understand such trifling work, threatened Pollio, and ordered him to put Locusta to death, being convinced that one or other of them had on purpose frustrated his intention, that they might not be liable to the odium of this horrid piece of iniquity, but, if it must be done, that all the blame might be thrown upon the Emperor. However, they promised to give Britannicus so subtle and violent a poison, that he should be carried off instantly. It was accordingly prepared in the Emperor's chamber, and in his presence: and, to remove all cause of mistrust from the young prince, it was given him at table, where nothing was ever served up, that had not first been tasted. They presented him a mess of soup that was boiling hot, and it was tasted before his face, because the poison was not yet put into it. The prince, just as they imagined, found it too hot, and desired that a little water might be poured in to cool it. This was immediately done; but the water contained so strong a dose of the poison, that, as soon as the prince tasted it he fell down dead, losing, in a moment, all the faculties of life and respiration.

Octavia, who was present at this tragical spectacle, and whom Nero, to conceal his crime, endeavoured to persuade that it was only one of those fits to which he said Britannicus was subject, was reduced to the cruel necessity of smothering her grief, that she might not

seem to suspect Nero, and of affecting a calm and serene countenance, whilst her heart was labouring under the most bitter affliction. She had certainly the greatest reason to be grieved, for by his death the celebrated Claudian family was extinct. She had always reckoned upon her brother as the only person who might one day bring about a happy change in her condition. For, though the bad treatment she continually experienced excited the compassion of all the world, yet her friends, who for the most part were timid and without power, could only give her their good wishes, but none were willing or able to do her any essential service.

Britannicus's sudden death was also a mortal blow to Agrippina; for, as she had no hand in that murder, she was astonished when she saw him perish by such horrid perfidy. She mingled her tears with those of Octavia, when they were at liberty to indulge their grief without witnesses; the Empress embraced her with the greatest demonstrations of affection, and gave her the most evident tokens of sincere love and friendship; there was a similarity in their condition, that inspired Agrippina with such humane sentiments as she had till then been a stranger to. But this last abominable action of Nero's was not the only vexation she had to undergo; for the favour and influence Poppæa enjoyed gave her still more anxiety. Nero had begun to show less fondness for Acte; but he was no sooner delivered from the slavery of that intrigue, than he fell into a state of captivity more complete and more durable than the other, by becoming so excessively enamoured of Sabina Poppæa, that nothing would content him but marrying her; and because the authority of his mother was an insurmountable obstacle

to the accomplishment of his desires, he resolved to shake off that intolerable yoke, by putting to death her who had given him life. Poppæa had taken a great deal of pains to bring him to this; and Nero, not being able to refuse her anything, but arming himself against all remorse, with the highest ingratitude and most barbarous fury determined to commit an execrable parricide, and dip his hands in the blood of that mother who had procured him the Empire. Thus Providence was pleased to permit that this ambitious Empress, who had perpetrated so many crimes to exalt an unnatural son to the throne, should meet with a just reward, and receive from that son the punishment she deserved.

Octavia was now the only victim left to be sacrificed to the brutal cruelty of Nero, and the restless jealousy of Poppæa. As it would have been very dangerous to attempt anything by way of violence against the life of a princess who was loved and admired by all the world, and whose conduct was irreproachable, so, on the other hand, it was no easy matter to do the business by poison, without its being perceived. The Emperor therefore resolved to be himself the executioner of his poor innocent wife and strangle her secretly; but, meeting with difficulties in all these methods, he determined at last to divorce her. This was the expedient which the infamous flatterers about the Emperor desired, to rid him of this incomparable princess,—those sycophants, who were more solicitous about their own interests than for the honour of their master, and had nothing so much at heart as the perpetuation of their power and authority by flattering his passions. Tigellinus was the chief of these. That insolent favourite had so insinuated himself into

the good graces of the Emperor, that he was the companion of all his debauches, and generally arranged them. As the authority of the Emperor was in a manner vested in him, and he possessed the secret of maintaining himself in his friendship by the most infamous methods, he made no scruple of affronting all the persons of quality and distinction in Rome, who dreaded his power and malice. In his whole person was to be seen a certain brutal air that made him feared, even by those, who, a while ago, had never so much as heard of him; and joining insolence,¹ which generally accompanies good fortune, to the unpolished rudeness which is always the consequence of a bad education, he troubled himself about nothing but how to preserve the influence and riches that he had acquired by artifice and iniquity. As he had a mean soul, was mercenary and corrupted by long practice of the most infamous vices, and was capable of every crime, he found it an easy matter to promote his interests by all the wicked means he could think of.² It must not therefore be wondered at, if (being such as he has been described) he advised Nero to divorce the virtuous Octavia, and marry the shameless Poppæa. Reasons were sought for to authorise this divorce; and because the princess's virtue could never be called in question, they were forced to have recourse to her being childless, and made that a

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

² Sophonius Tigellinus, who was become extremely odious by his vices and wickedness, had the good fortune, during the reign of Galba, to preserve not only his life, but his power, notwithstanding the cries and importunity of the people, who earnestly desired his death. But the Emperor Otho, to ingratiate himself, granted their request. Tigellinus was then at Sinuessa, and when they brought him this dismal news, he committed a crime which in itself deserved the punishment that was decreed him; for this infamous and corrupt man had the courage to anticipate it by cutting his own throat with a razor.

pretence for entreating Nero to put her away, that he might have successors by another wife. Upon this the Empress was separated from her husband; and in lieu of the Empire, which was her portion, they gave her the inheritance of Plautus, and assigned her Burrus's house to live in, which was looked upon as a sad presage for her.

This was not sufficient for Poppæa. Octavia's presence alarmed her ambition, and she thought it was of the greatest importance to her to get rid of one so disagreeable to her; but it was necessary to lay some crime to her charge, for which she might deserve to be banished, and it was impossible to find any true one. Tigellinus, very fertile in mischievous expedients, found no difficulty in this, but cheerfully undertook to make her as guilty as she pleased. One of Octavia's domestics, being corrupted by that infamous courtier, became the accuser of his mistress. He deposed that the Empress had a gallant named Eucer, a slave and a native of Alexandria, a player on the flute by profession; and upon this malicious accusation, the most chaste and virtuous Octavia was to be proved a prostitute. Her women and the ladies that attended her were put to the torture; and in order to extort from them false evidence against her, the most frightful instruments of punishment, such as were most capable of shaking the firmest resolution, were displayed before their eyes to intimidate them. They imagined they had gained their point, when some of them, being extremely terrified at the dreadful sight, yielded to their importunity; but if the force and violence of the tortures, the threats of Tigellinus, the weakness of their sex, and the presence of Nero's infernal ministers, and Poppæa's

jealousy, prevailed upon some of those poor women to waver in their duty, by deposing contrary to their consciences (having no other method of procuring a cessation to their torments, but by wrongfully accusing their innocent mistress), yet there were others who, in the midst of their sufferings, gave evidence to the truth with wonderful intrepidity, openly publishing the Empress's innocence, and justly praising her wisdom, prudence and modesty, their fidelity being proof against the tortures that were made use of to corrupt it. Thus the horrid trick was unmasked, to the unspeakable shame of Octavia's enemies. The truth was victorious, and this black accusation only served to lend a new lustre to that virtue which it was designed to blast. Tigellinus, Octavia's bitterest enemy, was put to the greatest confusion by one of these women, who had the boldness and courage to affront him to his face; for, as he was interrogating her, and asking her, in his brutal manner, if it was not true that her mistress had prostituted herself to Eucer the musician, she answered,¹ with a generous sort of contempt, that the least clean part of Octavia's person was infinitely purer than his scandalous mouth; a mortifying reproach, which could not but have killed him with shame, if so base a soul had been capable of it.

But, by the most monstrous iniquity and injustice, the Empress's innocence, that had been proved beyond all contradiction, and was universally acknowledged, was forced to give way to infernal calumny and falsehood. Octavia was banished to Campania, and guards set over her, as if she had been a state prisoner, whose dangerous practices were much to be feared. The people soon gave

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

evident tokens of their inclination and affection for the Empress, who was treated so unworthily; they even showed it in a manner neither timid nor silent, for they exclaimed openly against this unjust banishment. On every side nothing was to be heard but murmurings and complaints against Nero and indignation against Poppæa, who had occasioned this exile. The Emperor was soon informed of this, and was mightily alarmed at it; for nothing is more to be apprehended than the popular fury in its first heat, as there is no barrier capable of stemming such a torrent. This had such an effect upon him, that, pretending to be very sorry he had banished Octavia, he recalled her immediately.

As soon as she made her appearance in Rome, every heart was filled with joy and cheerfulness. The people demonstrated it in such a manner, as was not very respectful to the Emperor's mistress; for they threw down the statues that had been erected in her honour, and at the same time raised up those of the Empress that were pulled down, crowning them with flowers, carrying her images about the streets in triumph, and into the temples with the same veneration as those of the gods. They highly commended Nero for having taken his lawful spouse back again. One could see in every countenance that serenity which the exile of the Empress had banished; and nothing was spoken of but pleasures and rejoicings. In short, everybody gave such sincere demonstrations of their satisfaction, that it looked as if every individual had made his fortune by the return of the Empress.

This excess of public joy had very bad consequences for Octavia. The haughty Poppæa was more exasperated than ever because of the insults that she had received and

the utter contempt that the people had shown for her upon this occasion by overthrowing her statues. She reflected that this fury of the people had intimidated Nero, and had in a manner compelled him to recall Octavia, and did not doubt but the Emperor, since he so much regarded the humours and caprice of the mob, would, some time or other, settle his affections again upon the Empress, and consequently that she herself would, sooner or later, fall a sacrifice to the good of the public; she therefore employed all her charms and cunning to prevail upon Nero to banish Octavia again. She threw herself at his feet, and shedding tears in abundance, told him, with a most insinuating air, that it was wonderful he should, in such a manner, permit his authority to be despised, and stoop so low as to condescend to the will and pleasure of a mob; that their having got the better of him upon this occasion, was a shameful triumph of the people over the prince; that it was the first instance of an Emperor's yielding to an insolent multitude, to whose caprices he prostituted his dignity, when he could tamely suffer a person, whom he honoured with his affection, to be grossly affronted; that this rising of the people was an indication of what he had reason to fear for his own person, if they were to be humoured in this manner; that Octavia's power was more to be apprehended than he imagined, and that she had given a specimen of it in this late mutiny of the people, who had insolently prescribed laws to him, in forcing him to recall a person he had thought fit to banish. In short, she knew how to manage him so well, that Nero, imagining both his honour and his safety required that Octavia should die, or rather, not being able to refuse this victim to the jealousy of Poppæa,

by whom he was rather bewitched than enamoured of her, signed an order for her execution. It was agreed upon that it should not be carried out in Rome, for fear of exciting a sedition, but that Octavia should be sent away again, when it would be an easy matter to compass it.

The great difficulty was to fix some crime upon her with a tolerable appearance of probability, since she had been before accused of one not at all credible. The declaration of Octavia's women had put that affair in a clear light, and was a decisive proof of their mistress's innocence. But, if those proofs had not been so strong as they were, the high esteem she enjoyed and her blameless conduct would have sufficiently excused her. They therefore found it necessary to add to the crime of adultery that of attempting to disturb the state and to cause her to be accused by somebody who was to charge her on her own confession, and one who should hold such an office that there should be a probability of her making use of him to intrigue with in order to form a party and, to make that person entirely her friend, she was to purchase his interest at the expense of her honour. To invent such a horrible calumny and shamelessly adhere to it in the case of a princess, whose innocence and prudence were known to all the world, certainly required the basest and wickedest wretch that could be procured, and such a one Anicetus was thought to be. He was commander of the galleys at Misenum, and the same person who had been employed in the death of Agrippina.

They were not at all deceived in the man they had made choice of; it was not to be supposed that he would refuse to commit any crime, after having spilled the blood of Agrippina. He was sent for, and Nero told him that

it was not enough that he had delivered him from his mother; he expected he would also free him from the plots and evil designs of his wife; that, in order to do this, it was not necessary he should put her to death himself, or have recourse to any other violent measures; it would be sufficient if he affirmed that he had committed adultery with her. The Emperor assured him that he could not possibly do him a greater piece of service, and promised that he should be extremely well rewarded; and (that it might not be in his power to refuse) he told him that, after having trusted him with a secret of such importance, he could not do otherwise than put him to death, if he made any scruples, so that it might not be possible for him to reveal it.

Anicetus, who had no reputation to be solicitous about, for he had forfeited it by a number of crimes, was easily persuaded to undertake this work of iniquity; and accordingly, being tempted by Nero's promises, and intimidated by his threats, he confessed that he had been guilty of adultery with the Empress, and affirmed it before the Emperor's friends, or rather before the accomplices in his crimes, who were all people capable of any mischief, and had been assembled on purpose. This action completed Anicetus's wickedness and Octavia's misfortunes, who was in one moment accused, judged, and condemned. Never was a case less examined into, for all the judges were of the same opinion; and the consequence of Anicetus's confession was that Octavia was immediately sentenced to be banished, as if she had been convicted by the fullest evidence in the world. Anicetus's crime was also taken into consideration; he was banished to Sardinia, but care was taken to let him want for nothing as long as he lived.

The equity of this sentence was very much called in question, or rather, nobody doubted the partiality of it, because the assembly was made up of people without honour, and entirely devoted to Nero and Poppæa. The Emperor published aloud the traitorous designs that Octavia had formed against him and the Empire; he declared that she had not been ashamed to corrupt Anicetus, the captain of the galleys, whom she had prevailed upon to act jointly with her in this conspiracy, at the expense of her honour, prostituting herself shamefully to him, in order to make sure of the fleet. But in vain do people endeavour to disguise falsehood, for it is generally discovered by the very mask that is designed to hide it; and the precautions that are most commonly taken to carry on a cheat happen to be the means of its being found out. For Nero (to make this story of Octavia's adultery more readily believed) reported that she had caused herself to miscarry, in order to conceal her guilt and shame from her husband and the world, without recollecting that the first time he had a mind to divorce her (not being able with all his malice to lay any crime to her charge), he had been forced to have recourse to her barrenness, which, he said, was such as rendered her incapable of giving him successors. This (to the great shame and confusion of Nero) proved the falsehood of his assertion about the miscarriage.

As to Anicetus's having owned his crime, which was mentioned as an undeniable proof of Octavia's guilt, it was evident that it ought to have had no weight, and that the confession of that infamous officer did not deserve any credit. The assertion of a man who had committed so many crimes ought never to have been believed; nor

was it reasonable that Agrippina's executioner should be deemed an equitable accuser of Octavia. But how could it be expected that justice should take place in so partial an assembly, made up of mercenary courtiers and sycophants who were entirely devoted to Nero?

In the meantime unfortunate virtue was sacrificed without pity to triumphant jealousy, and the false and imaginary crimes of Octavia were expiated by a punishment that was but too real. This unhappy Empress was banished to the island of Pandataria; and never did any banished person excite so great nor so just a compassion in the hearts of the Romans. People spoke of the exile of Agrippina and her sisters, and of that of Julia, daughter of Augustus, but it was remembered that the former had found many comforts in the place of their banishment to mitigate their grief, and that none of them had suffered without having but too well deserved it; that, after all, their punishment had been preceded by many a happy day they had passed at Court, and that the pleasures they had formerly experienced might in some sort counterbalance their misfortunes. But they saw nothing to comfort Octavia, nor anything to lessen their sorrow and concern for her cruel treatment; since, without ever having in her whole life given the least reason to be complained of, she was unmercifully punished for imaginary faults, of which the bare accusation was worse to her than death.

She was conducted to the place of her exile, and on the road such rudeness and incivility were shown her, as her escorts should have been ashamed to exhibit even to the most vulgar and mean criminal. She was perpetually stunned with the noise of centurions and soldiers, who, adding the authority of the Emperor to their natural

insolence, treated her without the least pity or compassion, which sufficiently demonstrated the orders they had received, not to spare her in the least.

But, though this behaviour of her guards (equally cruel and insulting) was but a melancholy presage of her last misfortune, and she could easily read the sentence of her death in the conduct of her persecutors, yet she could not prevail upon herself willingly to renounce that life which was so loaded with bitterness and affliction. She was but twenty years old,¹ and might reasonably have *flattered herself with the hopes of enjoying some fortunate moments*, if she survived Nero, the author of all her misery; and according to all appearance, his reign would be but short, as that of tyrants generally is; for that unworthy Emperor was doing everything in his power to bring destruction upon himself, by an infamous indulgence in all manners of monstrous pollutions and also by the horrible cruelties he every day committed.

But Octavia never had the pleasure of seeing this happy change in her fortune; for, no sooner was she arrived at the place of her exile, than notice was given her to prepare for death. This charming and virtuous Empress could not hear this dreadful sentence without trembling. She pleaded that, being divorced from Nero, she ought not any longer to be reckoned his wife; and as she had renounced that position and all pretensions to it in favour of Poppæa, they ought to spare her life, since she did not intend to interfere with the good fortune of her rival; that she would, from that time forth, look upon herself as only sister to the Emperor, and conse-

¹ *Ac puella vicesimo ætatis anno inter centuriones et milites præsagio malorum iam a vita exempta, nondum tamen morte acquiescebat.* (Tacitus).

quently it would not be in her power, even if she were disposed, to be any obstacle to Poppæa's designs.

She invoked Germanicus (from whom both she and Nero were descended) and called upon Agrippina, who, though she had been the cause of all her misfortunes, had nevertheless treated her with less cruelty. But neither her tears nor her sighs could soften the hard hearts of those who were commanded to put her to death. They bound her and opened her veins; but the blood flowing but slowly, on account of the great terror she was in, they stifled her in a bath, and with her, the beauty, virtue and graces of the best Empress that ever was born of the family of the Cæsars.

Octavia's death put an end to Poppæa's jealousy, but not to her cruelty; for, not being content with having sacrificed this illustrious victim to her hatred, she must needs have her head brought to her. This object, so worthy of compassion, was to her a charming spectacle; she feasted her eyes upon it, and Rome had the inexpressible mortification of seeing, in the hands of an infamous prostitute, the head of the most worthy princess that ever honoured the Empire. The people were in the utmost affliction at the tragical end of this poor unhappy Empress. Her death was honoured with tears that were never shed with more sincerity, and which were certainly due to the merit of Octavia, who was deserving of a better destiny.

POPPÆA

SECOND WIFE OF NERO



HERE is nothing so bad that a person over fond of power is not capable of it. He will make no scruple to violate the most sacred laws, to break through the strictest bonds, or commit the most heinous crimes to gain his ends. The history of Poppæa will furnish us with sufficient proofs of this assertion; for, if she had not been ambitious, she would not have been guilty of so many prostitutions, she would not have persecuted the innocence of Octavia, or have prevailed upon Nero to murder his mother.

She was the daughter of Titus Ollius, who had formerly been quæstor,¹ and would have obtained the highest offices,² if he had not been involved in the misfortunes of Sejanus, whose friendship, after he was disgraced, was (to those who partook of it) as great a misfortune, as his hatred was in his prosperity to those who were so unhappy as to feel its effects. Her mother was that famous Poppæa, whose beauty and gallantries made so much noise in Claudius's reign.

Sabina Poppæa was so named after her grandmother. As for her father, though he had not much to boast of

¹ Sueton. vit. Ner.

² Tacit. Ann. 13.

in point of birth or capacity, yet he had always skill enough to insinuate himself into the good graces of the Emperors, who employed him sometimes at the head of the armies, where he performed such actions and ¹ behaved so well as to entitle him to the honour of a triumph and the consulship, and at other times in the government of provinces, where he passed some part of his life in continual fears and alarms from the malice of those false accusers, who were so much encouraged and listened to by Tiberius. He dreaded them so much, that to prevent the consequences of the machinations of those mischievous creatures, he decided ² to put an end to his life, which he did with great precipitation, as if he had a mind to disappoint Fortune, of whose caprices he was so much afraid.

Poppæa had received from nature every advantage except modesty. She was reckoned the most perfect beauty in the world. Her charms were of that sort, which strikes at first sight, and forces the admiration of all beholders. Her countenance and features were beyond description; their effect was heightened by youth and improved by a sweet and delightful air, which became her wonderfully. She had a peculiar grace when speaking, and her voice had such a sweetness as was not to be resisted; her conversation was enchanting in its vivacity and sprightliness. In short, she was altogether charming, and she knew how to heighten and set off her charms to advantage with the most captivating and becoming ornaments of dress; so that, if she had possessed good qualities proportionate to her beauty, she would have been the most accomplished person in the universe.

¹ Tacit. Ann. 6.

² Dio. lib. 58.



From the painting by Georges Rochegrosse

A typical street scene in ancient Rome. The populace were not slow in following the example of some of the Emperesses who set no bounds to the indulgence of their taste for flirtation

But, whether the bad example of her mother had influenced her so far as to compel her, in a manner, to give herself up to vice, or whether her natural inclinations to debauchery and libertinism were so violent, that every consideration had to give way to them, or lastly, whether her ambition was the cause of all her irregularities, it is certain that she abandoned herself entirely to them, and made so shameful and vile a use of her charms, that, as an historian observes, she made no difference between her husbands and her gallants. Her duty and reputation were never put in the scale against her ambition; the desire she had to advance herself extinguished every sentiment of honour, and she never failed to sacrifice to her vanity all the advantages of her mind and person, whenever they could be instrumental to her preferment. As to her wit, she had as much of it as enabled her to act her part very well in company, and could give it such a turn as made her agreeable to people of all characters; she was, upon some occasions, as skilful a prude as she was a coquette upon others.

She passed her youth in her mother's house, which was a school of debauchery and prostitution; there it was that she received the first homage of those who came in crowds to make their offerings at the shrine of her beauty, against the powerful attractions of which it was next to impossible for any man to defend himself. At first indeed she received all her adorers with a good deal of indifference; she even affected not to display her charms to the utmost advantage, but rather to be shy and reserved,¹ avoiding to be seen much in public, and when she did go abroad (as Tacitus observes) she wore a veil that

¹ Xiphilin. in Ner.

covered half her face, whether it was that this became her best, or that the beauty of what appeared might excite a desire to see the rest; but this restraint and affected modesty not being suitable either to her inclinations or her designs, she soon threw off the mask, and showed herself in reality such as she was, receiving indifferently the incense of flattery from whatever quarter it came, and her house was open to every one.

She had too many charms not to be surrounded with admirers. Rufus Crispinus was one of the most assiduous.¹ She was so well satisfied with his addresses that she married him. The issue of this marriage was the young Crispinus, whom Nero afterwards put to death, for reasons as unjust as they were ridiculous.² This marriage, however, put no constraint upon Poppæa, for Crispinus, who was excessively in love with her, and knew that she had never been used to be thwarted in anything, was so foolish and convenient a husband, as to indulge her so far as to suffer as many as pleased to have free access to her and to offer up the same tribute of praise and homage that she had been used to from all persons of mark and distinction in Rome. A brilliant assembly met every day at her house, and she was continually surrounded with crowds of flattering courtiers, who came to adore her beauty; it was the general rendezvous of play, amusements, and pleasures, and it was among these zealous votaries of her charms that

¹ Sueton. vit. Ner.

² This young lad, playing one day with other children of his age, diverted himself and his companions with imitating a king. This was told Nero, who looking upon it as ominous, and considering that it foretold the Empire to Crispinus, became so cruelly jealous, that once, when they were amusing themselves with fishing, he ordered the poor boy to be thrown into the sea.

she exercised that talent, in which she excelled, of entertaining her auditors with her bewitching conversation, and answering, with incomparable grace and affability, the delicate compliments that were paid her by all that were present. But Crispinus soon perceived that his complaisance was carried a great deal too far, and was attended with serious consequences. He found by sad experience, that those marks of esteem, which look so like friendship, are often the dangerous and ensnaring attacks of a lover; and that those diversions, those parties of pleasure which women are so fond of, and the familiarities they admit in such places, are generally the forerunners of their ruin, and the destruction of their virtue.

Of all those that frequented Poppæa's house Otho seemed to be the most remarkable. This young man was descended from a very illustrious family and was extraordinarily handsome. Besides these advantages, he was the Emperor's favourite and inseparable companion, partner in all his follies and vices, privy to all his secrets, and obtained whatever he pleased to ask, for it was through him, and by his interest, that all favours were conferred; so that those who were happy enough to make Otho their friend might look upon their business as done. Being therefore so powerful at Court, it was no wonder that Poppæa was extremely civil to him, and that he should easily insinuate himself into the good graces of a woman who had such vast designs. He was continually¹ praising her beauty, and never visited her without being loaded with presents, nor went away without leaving behind him evident tokens of his prodigality, which, with her, passed for generosity and greatness of soul; so that

¹ Tacit. Ann. 13.

by these great extravagances, accompanied by the most gallant and polite behaviour in the world, this cunning courtier so managed his affairs, that Poppæa soon became sensible of his merit, and thought herself obliged to recompense his liberality.

There is nothing that more speedily and effectually captivates the hearts of some women than presents. It is the rock that their strongest resolutions split upon, and that virtue must be proof against everything, that does not yield to the all-conquering gold. A lover who is rich and liberal is already in a very fair way of succeeding, and may be said to be within sight of his happiness; whereas others, with all their birth, wit, and merit, have many a weary step to take before they make any considerable progress; but there are few Danaes that are not to be won by the golden shower. Poppæa, having received so many presents and favours from Otho, imagined herself not at liberty to be so ungrateful as to make no return. The great interest and influence of the courtier flattered the ambition of this haughty woman, and put a thousand projects of grandeur into her head, which were vastly increased by the promises he made her, so that her mind was sufficiently filled with ideas of splendour and authority. She now thought of nothing but Otho; Crispinus became insupportable to her; she hated him mortally, proved unfaithful to him, and gave herself up entirely to Otho.

This favourite, when he first began to pay his addresses to Poppæa, had something more in his head than his own interests.¹ It is reported that Nero had not been insensible to this lady's charms, but some remains of respect

¹ Plutarch. Tacit. Histor. 1.

for his mother, who had already made a great noise about his amour with Acte, obliged him to proceed with caution; he therefore charged Otho, his chief confidant, to prepare her heart for him. But, as it is the most difficult thing in the world not to act a double part in this sort of commissions, which put the fidelity of the agent so much to the test, the favourite became terribly smitten with the charms of Crispinus's wife; and whether he imagined that Nero was not very solicitous about this conquest, being taken up with Acte, or that he was glad to secure Poppæa to himself, or lastly, that he believed it necessary to his fortune to get her into his power, that at a proper time he might, through her means, promote his own advancement, and preserve his interest with Nero, by sacrificing to him the charming Poppæa, he married her after Crispinus's death, which happened very opportunely.

As he was violently in love with her, he never ceased to boast of her extraordinary beauty; and especially he affected, before the Emperor, to dwell much upon the regularity of her features, and the inexpressible gracefulness of all her actions, often declaring how happy he was, in possessing¹ the finest woman in the universe. His constant repetition of this excited Nero's curiosity; and as he was not yet thoroughly acquainted with Poppæa, he was very desirous to be himself a judge of her merit, that he might see whether she was deserving of all the praises that had been so lavishly bestowed upon her. He saw her then, and finding that she was even more beautiful than she had been represented, he was immediately rather bewitched than enamoured with her.

Poppæa, who carried her views much further than

¹ Tacit. Ann. 13. c. 46.

Otho imagined, like a skilful woman took advantage of her husband's false measures. She at once observed the impression that her beauty had made upon the Emperor, and entertained no doubt that, if she could win his affections, it would be the certain means of accomplishing her vast designs. She resolved to spare no pains to complete this glorious conquest, or rather this unjust usurpation. In order to do this, she set all her charms to work; tender and passionate looks, insinuating caresses, and magnificent apparel; in short, everything that could possibly ensnare his heart was put in practice, and with great success. For, as she had a peculiar art in captivating as many as she had a mind to please, she found it no difficult matter to draw into her net a prince, who was not of an age nor humour to exercise the virtue of self-denial, nor did he hesitate a moment whether he should gratify his inclinations or not. He attributed to real love the false tokens of affection which were given him by this artful coquette, and became so violently enamoured, that he could no longer live without her.

These assiduities alarmed Otho, whose passion had in a manner changed its nature as soon as he was Poppæa's husband, for he could not bear the thoughts of Nero's sharing with him the possession of her; on the contrary, he repented that he had so inadvertently procured himself a dangerous rival, who did not know what it was to be contradicted in his pleasures. It is by no means safe to hold disputes with one's master and Emperor, against whom one cannot even make use of one's advantages; for it leaves one no other choice than that of yielding, or bearing patiently all the consequences. Whatever disagreeableness there may be in doing one or the other,

Otho was obliged, whether he would or not, to submit to it; but not without such evident affliction, as lay very heavy at his heart, and soon showed itself in his countenance, which Poppæa took notice of.

It is certain that she had a real esteem and affection for Otho, but the splendour of the throne afforded her more flattering and charming ideas than any other consideration. Her ambition was the only master she served; it was not Nero that she desired, but she could not help adoring his fortune; so that the endeavours she made use of to triumph over his heart were not on account of any love she had for his person, but in order to promote her own advancement and to make him purchase her favours at the price of the Empire. But as she was not sure of meeting with this extraordinary success, she could not resolve to part with Otho entirely, that she might at least secure one of her admirers. To bring this about, she conducted herself with great cunning and policy, and affected to be very reserved, knowing that by such behaviour she could not fail of pleasing Otho, who was jealous, and at the same time, of irritating Nero's desires; for she was not ignorant that disgust and indifference are very often the effect of a too easy conquest, some favours being only valuable in proportion to the difficulty with which they are obtained; that love often ends in the possession of the object beloved, and that Nero, who was naturally very inconstant, might possibly soon be cured of his passion, if he could gratify it upon too easy terms.

She managed her design with great address; for, as she possessed, in an eminent degree, the talent of assuming every character that suited her convenience, she

began to put on the prude, and affected mightily to blame her past conduct. At first, she industriously avoided being alone with Nero, or even holding any long conversations with him. A strict modesty, and a severe kind of circumspection in her manners, succeeded that mirth and cheerfulness she had been hitherto remarkable for. She now delivered long harangues upon prudence and discretion, which she resolved to practise in all her words and actions. In short, she showed upon every occasion so austere a regularity, that, on Nero going to pay her a visit one evening when Otho was absent, she denied herself somewhat rudely, saying, that she could not, without being guilty of a crime, rob Octavia of her husband's affections; ¹ that she had all the reason in the world to be faithful to Otho, who had everything in him that was commendable, both in his person and inclinations; ² that after all, she was married to Otho, and would never give her husband any reason to dissolve a marriage that he had made very valuable to her by a most agreeable life, such as Nero with all his sovereign power could not exceed.

Poppæa could not possibly have acted more for her purpose, and the snare was too well laid for Nero to escape. This false modesty and reservedness inflamed the Emperor's heart more than if she had been ever so liberal of her favours, but it nearly proved fatal to Otho; for Nero, having taken it into his head that Poppæa's behaviour was all owing to the orders she had received from her husband, was so enraged at it, that, in the first heat of his anger, he even threatened to put to death him who had kindled it. He entirely withdrew all the

¹Plutarch in Galb.

²Tacit. Ann. 13.

affection he formerly had for him, deprived him of his confidence and intimacy, and would certainly have made him feel the utmost effects of his displeasure, if it had not ¹ been moderated by Seneca. This philosopher, who was always using his best endeavours to calm the impetuosity of his pupil's furious and ungovernable disposition by mild and gentle counsels, was besides a good friend of Otho's. He represented to the Emperor (who had not yet thrown off all respect for his tutor), that a revenge like this could not but make a great noise in the world, and publish abroad the true reason of Otho's disgrace, which was by no means fit to be known; that there were other methods of getting rid of his rival, without having recourse to those violent remedies, since he had nothing to do but to send him from Rome on some pretence, and then he might see Poppæa as much as he pleased, without a rival. Nero, who perhaps had not quite divested himself of all friendship for a man he had been so intimate with and had opened himself to upon all occasions without the least reserve, especially in his most secret debaucheries, and to whom he had (in a manner) given the key of his heart, approved this expedient of his perceptor. He made Otho governor of Lusitania, and by so doing procured for himself the satisfaction he so ardently wished for, of seeing Poppæa without a rival.

It may be asserted that Otho was himself the author of his misfortune; and that which he imagined would be a means of preserving his fortune and interest had like to have cost him his life. He found himself obliged to quit Rome and Poppæa, and set out for Lusitania full of sorrow and jealousy, plainly perceiving that, under the

¹Plutarch.

glorious title of governor, he was condemned to a rigorous banishment. So true it is, that there is no reckoning upon the friendship of great men, nor is there any solidity in their professions of kindness, especially when their favour has been obtained by crimes and iniquity.

In the meantime Otho so managed his affairs that what he thought was his disgrace proved extremely to his advantage. He behaved¹ in his government with so much moderation and wisdom, that all his past irregularities were forgotten. The bad impression which his dissoluteness and debaucheries had created in everybody's mind was quite obliterated, and his exactness,² integrity, and the regularity of his conduct made people conceive so high an opinion of him, and so effectually gained him the hearts of all the world, especially the army, that afterwards they all declared for him, and elevated him to the throne.

Nero, being now delivered from his rival, omitted nothing that could re-instate him in his former happiness, and regain the good graces of his mistress; he exhausted his whole stock of complaisance and courtesy, and even condescended to make the most humble submission, which was the shameful mark of his defeat and slavery.

Besides this, he loaded the haughty Poppæa with rich and magnificent presents, broke off all commerce with his once beloved Acte, of whom she was jealous, and, to carry his respect as far as it could go, promised to marry her. This was just what she aimed at; for being infinitely more in love with Nero's rank than his person, and her

¹ Sueton. vit. Othon. Plutar. in Othon.

² Tacit. Ann. 13. Histor. 1.

ambition being without limits, she was aiming at no less than mounting the throne; and there was nothing she was not capable of doing, to gain this important point. Her charms were not the only engines she set to work upon this occasion, nor was it without design that she entertained in her house soothsayers, and those sort of people who foretold events,¹ whom she consulted and employed in her most secret affairs. But there were two great obstacles in her way, that seemed to be an almost insuperable check to her soaring hopes, and these were the authority of Agrippina, and Nero's marriage with Octavia, obstacles which, it must be owned, were such as one would think could never be got over; but ambition is not easily repulsed. It is a passion that nothing puts a stop to, nothing discourages. There are no difficulties it is not ready to encounter. Its desires increase in proportion to its acquisitions, and its gratification is so far from satisfying, that it only serves to make it aspire after new honours and dignities. So far is it from bearing a superior, that it cannot endure an equal, for everything that comes in competition with it is exposed to its fury and persecution.

It is true that Poppæa did not dip her hands in the blood of those who opposed her, but she was not less guilty of their destruction, because in fact, she was the occasion of it.² After she had made herself absolute mistress of the Emperor's heart, she forgot nothing that could contribute to the ruin of such people as either by their offices, power, or interest, were in a position to obstruct her most ambitious schemes. Sometimes she irritated the Emperor against his mother, by inspiring

¹ Tacit. Histor. i. c. 22.

² Dio. lib. 61.

him with mistrust and suspicions, by making him jealous and afraid of her authority, which, she said, Agrippina was endeavouring to make supreme and independent. At other times she suggested that his mother had very bad designs against him, and that, as she had given him the Empire, she imagined she had a right to deprive him of it if she thought proper. She did not scruple to invent bitter things against Octavia, spreading false reports about her, and artfully insinuating that she was intriguing against Nero, and seducing the people. When she had fair opportunities, she would throw in a provoking¹ sort of raillery, reproaching him, that instead of being Emperor, he was more a subject than other people; that his submission could not be called respect or filial duty, but the dependence of a slave; that he was only looked upon as Agrippina's pupil, who kept him in a subjection like a child. "In short," said she (with one of those enchanting irresistible looks, which she knew so well how to put on, and at the same time letting fall some tears) "what reason can you have for deferring
"any longer our marriage, if it be true that you are
"your own master? Or what objection can anybody
"have against it, that ought to be of sufficient weight
"to hinder you from accomplishing your desires? Do
"they find any fault with my person? Is my beauty
"surpassed by that of any other, and does it not deserve
"a suitable return of love and tenderness on your side?
"Can anybody pretend that my birth does not entitle
"me to the honour of being your wife, when it is remembered that the highest dignities of the republic have
"been held by my family? Have not my ancestors been

¹Tacit. Ann. 14.

“honoured with the same glorious ornaments, wherein
“consists the lustre and grandeur of the noblest houses
“in Rome, namely, the rods of the consulship, and the
“laurels of the triumpher? Can I not reckon in my
“family many generals who have deserved the Empire,
“and whose extraordinary services have been judged
“worthy of great rewards? But is it not rather the case
“that Agrippina is apprehensive that my advancement
“may be a check to her pride and unlimited ambition;
“and that the attachment to your interests, to which our
“marriage would of course commit me, would naturally
“oblige me to disclose to you her pernicious designs, and
“so publish to the senate and the people all her crimes
“and her insatiable avarice? If your mother (continued
“this artful woman), who is so accustomed to rule you
“like an infant, cannot bear that I should live with
“you, restore me to my husband, give me back to Otho.
“I am ready to go to him, were it to the furthest corner
“of the world; and when I shall be at a distance from
“the inevitable dangers to which I see you exposed, it
“will be less grievous to me to hear the insults heaped
“upon my Emperor spoken of, than to be a sad spectator
“of them.”

These keen and cunning remonstrances made a great impression on the Emperor, the more so, because Poppæa was assisted in her designs by those who had access to him; who, seeing their authority weakened, or rather quite eclipsed by that of Agrippina, were very glad to make use of Poppæa's interest in opposition to hers, but at the same time did not imagine that Nero would carry his fury and resentment so far, as to put his mother to death. But such is the deplorable weakness of those who

are possessed with the demon of irregular and unlawful amours, that they are blinded by their tyrannical passion, and it becomes impossible for them to refuse it anything. They are forced to subscribe rashly, and without examination, to everything it exacts, not even sparing those that are nearest to them, or having the least regard to the laws of nature.

The haughty Poppæa, after having brought the Empress Agrippina to destruction, resolved to do as much for Octavia, now the only person that hindered her marriage with Nero. As she had admirable talents for gallantry, there was nothing capable of exciting desire that she did not put in practice to inflame the Emperor, and she succeeded so well, that Nero perfectly adored her, so that, not having it in his power to deny her anything, he put away Octavia, banished her, and soon after married Poppæa, with whom he was rather bewitched than enamoured.

The people, who are easily reconciled to whatever the sovereign thinks proper to do, without giving themselves much trouble about the justice of the matter, are very often by that means imposed upon, and for want of consideration become approvers of those faults and vices which they would otherwise abhor. They therefore erected statues in honour of the new Empress, giving by this base piece of flattery a shameful and unjust approbation to the scandalous marriage of Nero, and consequently to the treatment poor Octavia had met with. Poppæa, finding herself at last exalted to the throne of the Empire, which she had so ardently wished for, thought of nothing but enjoying her new dignity; but her triumph did not last longer than Octavia's disgrace, for

the scene soon changed for both of them. The people, who are generally very fickle and inconstant, had no sooner reflected upon the unjust and injurious banishment of Octavia, and the cruel treatment this only remaining branch of Cæsar's family had received, than they began to murmur, and loudly demanded that Claudius's daughter should be recalled. All the town was in an uproar, nothing was to be heard but complaints, which soon reached the ears of Nero, who, fearing the caprice of the multitude, pretended to repent that he had sent her away, and immediately recalled her.

The news of the Empress's return was received with universal approbation. The whole town went out to meet her, and never had such great satisfaction been seen in the countenances of the Romans, to the great vexation of Poppæa, whose statues they threw down with great marks of contempt, and at the same time carried Octavia's about the streets in triumph. But these demonstrations of love and affection, which the people with so much warmth showed this unfortunate princess, only hastened her destruction; for Poppæa, provoked to the highest degree at being thus wounded in her most tender part, and having her statues trampled under foot, was inconsolable. She thought herself affronted in the cruellest manner, and drew conclusions from it that were not very favourable to her designs, for she could not then doubt but that the inclinations of the Romans were for Octavia; accordingly, concluding that she could never be safe upon the throne as long as Octavia lived, since Nero, solicited by the supplications and complaints of the people, (whose hatred she saw he was apprehensive of) might at last open his eyes to the unjust manner in which he had

treated his lawful wife, who had given him the Empire, she resolved to lose no time, but to sacrifice Octavia as soon as possible to ensure her own peace and safety.

In order to persuade Nero to this, she thought it necessary to call in to her assistance the utmost efforts of her charms, and employ the most delicate strokes of her policy. She very dexterously identified the Emperor's interests with her own; she exaggerated the power of Octavia, her influence with the people, her evil designs; and to make Nero more susceptible of the impressions she intended to give him, she insinuated, that this importunity of the people in favour of Octavia amounted to no less than a downright revolt against his authority. Then (adding the most enchanting look she could possibly put on to the irresistible charms of her all-persuading voice) she threw herself at his feet with her face bathed in tears; and in this posture, which even gave her an additional beauty, she told him, "that however desirous she
"was to render indissoluble the bands of a marriage,
"which would make her his inseparable companion, and
"consequently procure her the greatest honour she could
"possibly aspire to, yet it was not her intention to make
"him any such request. No," continued she, "that is
"not the favour I have to ask; I come to put my life
"under your protection. The seditious partisans of
"Octavia, sheltering themselves under the specious
"name of the people, undertake in the time of peace what
"they dared not attempt during the war; for if you
"consider the affair, you will find that, when they lately
"took up arms, it was against you that they did so.
"They seem to want nothing but a leader, which Octavia
"will find without giving herself much trouble. In

"short,¹ since, by all appearance, my life is what they
"aim at, I would take the liberty to ask what I have
"done to forfeit it, what crime or mischief I have com-
"mitted; whom I have had the misfortune to injure or
"displease; is it because I may probably give lawful
"heirs to the Empire, that the people are so exasperated
"against me; or does Rome prefer to see upon the throne
"the infamous posterity of a miserable player on the
"flute?" (meaning Eucer) to whom (by a horrible
calumny) Nero gave out that Octavia had prostituted
herself.

"Your interests, however," added she with great art
and subtlety, "shall always be infinitely dearer to me
"than my own. If it be true that I have done harm to
"anybody, or if you are determined to have the people
"for your master, do not wait until you are compelled
"to recall Octavia; do it with a good grace and not
"under compulsion. Let it not be at the instigation or
"rather command of a brutal and insolent mob. The
"public welfare and yours ought in all reason to take
"the place of my own private advantage. Sacrifice me,
"then, to the good of the State, or rather to the un-
"reasonable hatred of the people. Let me die a martyr
"to the persecutions of Agrippina and the jealousy of
"Octavia, or if you please, say to the interests of the
"State; I am quite ready to submit to your good pleasure
"in all things. But, if you have not a mind that a con-
"fused multitude, a mutinous rabble should prescribe
"laws to you, if you can resolve to show that you are
"Emperor, and have yet some small kindness for Pop-
"pæa, put her life in safety by punishing those who

¹ Tacit. Ann. 14.

"threaten it. Nothing will be easier for you than to prevent the like seditions for the future; for, since Octavia is the only cause of them, you have only to deprive the people of all hope of seeing her again at Rome as Empress, and some other suitable husband may easily be procured for her."

Never was slander set out in more plausible colours, nor imposture invented with more specious marks of probability. Nero gave in to it at once; he listened very attentively to this studied discourse of Poppæa, which she pronounced with such artifice, that the Emperor did not in the least doubt the truth of what she said. He was alarmed at this pretended intrigue of Octavia, and was afraid of that poor princess, weak and defenceless as she was; for Poppæa knew so well how to support her assertion, by making the danger appear certain and imminent, that Nero, believing his life was at stake, if Octavia was suffered any longer to enjoy hers, had her cruelly put to death; for, after having dipped his hands in his mother's blood, the greatest crimes cost him but little trouble, nor did he scruple to become the murderer of his innocent wife. Poppæa, finding her jealousy appeased, her power established, and her marriage secured, would no longer deny herself the pleasure of being revenged on those who had opposed her designs, and of heaping favours upon such as had been her friends.

Doryphorus, secretary of petitions, forfeited his life for the liberty he had taken of disapproving of the Emperor's passion for Poppæa; Gessius Florus,¹ for being the husband of Cleopatra, Poppæa's intimate friend, was made governor of Judæa, Nero being unable to refuse

¹ Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. 20.

her anything, nor could he prevail upon himself to run the risk of disobliging her whom he rather adored than loved.

He admired her beauty as much as she valued it herself, and never omitted an opportunity of extolling it, which he did by the most delicate and studied praises. He went so far as to compose ¹ verses upon the delightful brilliancy of her hair, which he compared to amber.

It is certain that Poppæa was an accomplished beauty; but it must also be confessed, that never did anybody take more care to preserve their charms; for in order to keep and heighten those graces that had ² procured her so many admirers, she spared neither cost nor pains. Besides prodigious sums, which she laid out in the composition of the most costly washes and pomatums for her complexion, she ³ caused to be maintained, with vast care and at great expense, five hundred she asses that had just had young, which were milked every day to make ⁴ a bath for her; for she had been informed that nothing was comparable to it for preserving the skin and keeping it from wrinkles, those cruel effects of age, and wherever she travelled,⁵ she was attended by this ridiculous equipage.

Great variety of the finest apparel and most precious jewels wonderfully increased her natural beauty. She appeared every day in the most magnificent clothes; her furniture was sumptuous, and her equipage the most brilliant that could be imagined. The mules attached to her litter were adorned with the most costly harness, and were shod with solid gold instead of iron; the traces and

¹ Plin. Hist. nat. lib. 17. cap. 3. ⁴ Plin. lib. 38. c. 11. Juvenal. Sat. 6.

² Plin. lib. 11. c. 41. lib. 28. cap. 12.

³ Juvenal Sat. 6.

⁵ Xiphilin in Ner.

reins were all wrought with gold thread¹ and wire, and she never appeared in public without all these tokens of her unbounded pride and vanity. Never was there seen such prodigious luxury. As she had nothing so much at heart as the desire of pleasing, she had that perpetually in view in all her actions. She had recourse to her looking-glass every moment, in order to study her looks and gestures, and one day this haughty Empress, not thinking herself so handsome as usual, and foreseeing with sorrowful heart the sad but inevitable decline of her charms, which the fatal laws of time would not spare, wept bitterly, and prayed the gods that she might die before she grew old.

Though she applied her beauty to very bad purposes, she affected to be very modest, and had an outside appearance that deceived people. It was without doubt this external show of virtue that induced Josephus to launch out into the praises of this Empress; or else we must suppose that it was in consideration of the particular obligations that illustrious Jew was under to Poppæa, who often honoured him with her protection upon occasions when he had the most powerful courtiers, and even kings, to oppose. This appeared in the affair of Felix.

Felix was the brother of Pallas, remarkable for his influence and power in Claudius's reign (whom he governed as he pleased), and for his immense riches, which were the fruits of all the extortions he had been guilty of, which at last hastened his death. Felix was sent as governor to Judæa, where, being supported by his brother's interest at Court, he exercised his authority with that haughtiness² and brutal pride which is natural to those,

¹Plin. lib. 33. c. 11.

²Tacit. Ann. 12.

who, from a low condition, have been exalted to honours and great employments. Among a number of arbitrary things which he did, in order to create a high opinion of his power, he caused some of the Jewish priests to be apprehended, upon a very slight pretence, loaded with chains, and sent to Rome to be tried. Baronius is of opinion, that these were the people who had made a vow not to eat or drink till they had killed St. Paul.¹

King Agrippa, whose father was so powerful at Rome, happening to be interested in this affair, made such strong representations at Court, in conjunction with Felix, that the prisoners were put into close confinement and treated cruelly at Rome, without any one being at the trouble of examining whether they were blamable or not. Josephus, who was their friend, knowing their innocence, resolved to go and defend their cause. He embarked² for that purpose, and upon his journey happened to meet with Aliturius, a Jew and a comedian, mightily esteemed by Nero (who was very fond of that sort of people, and used to appear upon the stage among them) and also by Poppæa. It was no difficult matter for Josephus, being a person of great distinction and consideration among the Jews, to make this man his friend, who was rejoiced at having an opportunity of doing a service to a countryman and a person of Josephus's merit. They travelled together, and were no sooner arrived at Rome, than Aliturius made what haste he could to recommend as warmly as possible Josephus's cause to the Emperor and Empress, to whom he likewise presented Josephus afterwards. This illustrious Jew told his story so gracefully, and with so much good sense, that Nero and Poppæa

¹ Baron. ad An. Ner. 2. acta 32. ² Joseph. in vita sua.

were charmed with him; the latter especially was so glad to oblige Josephus, that she undertook his business herself, and interceded for the prisoners with the Emperor. So powerful a recommendation could not fail of being victorious; the prisoners were immediately acquitted and set at liberty, in spite of all the intrigues of the King of Judæa and Felix; and Josephus, besides gaining his cause, received from Poppæa such magnificent presents as were worthy of his merit and the high rank of his benefactress.

Poppæa looked upon her exaltation to the throne as the greatest happiness that could possibly befall her, because she did not know the value of that which was offered her by Heaven, the knowledge of the true religion that St. Paul would have instructed her in, and persuaded her to embrace.

St. Paul,¹ the first time he resided at Rome, had made some acquaintances at Nero's Court; it is even confidently affirmed that he kept up a correspondence with Seneca, though many authors are of opinion that those letters are fictitious, being unworthy of St. Paul and Seneca,² and the work of the same impostor; but it is generally agreed that Seneca must have known St. Paul,³ whose reputation and doctrine, being very extraordinary, made a great noise, and were much talked of. Be that as it may, it is certain that St. Paul was well known to many of Nero's officers, since he says himself that ⁴ his bonds were become famous at the Emperor's Court.⁵

¹ S. Chrysost. *advers. Vituper. vitæ Monast.* ² Godeus, *Hist. Eccles.*

³ Baron, *ad. Ann. Ner. 12.* S. Chrysost. in *Act. hom. 54.*

⁴ *Ad Philip. 1. 13.*

⁵ It cannot be denied that St. Paul had acquaintances in Nero's family. "I would have you to know," says he himself to the Philippians,

In all likelihood it was by means of the friends St. Paul had in the Emperor's palace that he found opportunities of speaking to Poppæa. He represented to her, with a generous freedom, the disorders of her past life; and finding her well enough disposed to hear him, he explained to her the mysteries of the Christian religion, and exhorted her to embrace its precepts and practice its rules. These remonstrances being made with that true apostolical zeal for which St. Paul was so remarkable, operated very powerfully upon the Empress, which Nero perceived. It was touching him in the most tender part, to inspire Poppæa with such sentiments as he could not approve of. He was informed that it was St. Paul who had given her the austere lessons, which had made her so discreet and modest; and in the first transports of his rage he had him apprehended, loaded with irons, and shut up in a close prison, after having abused him with all the opprobrious names he could think of, and treated him as a knave, corrupter and vagabond.¹

St. Peter and St. Paul were confined together, and were afterwards companions in their martyrdom. They were

"that what has happened to me, far from doing harm, has much contributed to the advancement of the Gospel, for my bonds are much spoken of in the Emperor's palace, and among all the Romans." It is even certain that this apostle had converted to Christianity many officers of Cæsar's household; for towards the end of the same epistle, he says to the Philippians, "all the saints salute you, especially those of Cæsar's household." This has induced St. Jerome to assert, that St. Paul contrived to form a Church in the very palace of the Emperor, his persecutor. He goes further still, for he will have it that Seneca turned Christian, and corresponded with St. Paul; he even places him in the rank of saints, and ecclesiastical authors. It is true, that there are but few people who do not deny the veracity of those letters, but on the other hand it is generally taken for granted that St. Paul must have been personally acquainted with Seneca, his doctrine and imprisonment being so much talked of at Rome.

¹This place is now called San Pietro in Carcere. It was formerly called Carcer Tullianus.

shut up in a frightful dungeon, but even there the guards were not able to resist the words of life that flowed from their mouths, so that, being fully convinced of the truth of that holy religion which the apostles taught, these gaolers were immediately baptised, and a few days after, being accused and convicted of being Christians,¹ they suffered, with wonderful intrepidity, a glorious martyrdom for the faith of Jesus Christ, which they embraced.

The narrow limits of St. Paul's prison bore no proportion to his zeal. This good² apostle, having made his guards his friends, found means by his emissaries to exhort the Empress Poppæa to yield to the force of truth, and profess that faith which he had preached to her, but his endeavours were without success; for as the steps she had taken towards virtue by his advice were only some weak efforts, her vicious habits soon reassumed their former strength, in spite of the salutary doctrine of the apostle, which Nero took care to put a stop to, and prevent its having the designed effect; for being told that even from the dungeon the apostle did not slacken his endeavours, nor cease to instruct the Empress, but that he was continually pressing her to conform herself to the precepts of a religion, the sanctity of which did by no means suit his inclinations, he had him beheaded without the town, and the same day St. Peter was crucified by his order.

Poppæa returned to her former abominations. Still intoxicated with her beauty and her power, she applied herself more and more to the preservation of the one by the charms of the other; and the Emperor, who loved her as much as ever, finding her in every respect the same as

¹ Martyrol. Rom. 2. Julii.

² S. Chrysost. advers. vit. Monast.

she was before, set no bounds to his complaisance. But what inflamed him yet more was the hope he had of her bringing him an heir to the Empire, for, to his excessive joy, the Empress was with child. He demonstrated his satisfaction by all the ways he could think of, amongst the rest numerous vows to the gods for a happy delivery were not forgotten.

The senate, the people, and all the orders of the city were too good courtiers to be backward in paying their respects, and showing how they shared in the good fortune of the Emperor. Poppæa was brought to bed at Antium of a girl, who was named Claudia, and was immediately honoured with the title of August, as well as her mother. Nero, seeing his wishes accomplished, indulged himself in an excess of joy.¹ He caused the most sumptuous and magnificent games to be celebrated according to the Athenian ceremonies. He dedicated a temple to the goddess of Fecundity, in gratitude for the fertility of Poppæa; and that nothing might be wanting to do honour to the princess's birth, he caused games and shows to be represented in a theatre beyond the Tiber, where was assembled an innumerable multitude of people, to hear the songs and hymns that were composed on this occasion in honour of young Claudia; and the Emperor himself must needs perform a part among the musicians.

The obsequious senate went in a body to Antium in great ceremony, to congratulate the Empress upon her happy delivery; all the orders did the same, and each strove to outdo the other in respect and courtesy.

But this joy was soon turned into mourning; Claudia

¹ Plin. Tacit. Sueton.

lived but a few months; and as Nero did not at the time of her birth know how to confine his satisfaction within reasonable bounds, so on the other hand his grief at her death was no less immoderate. This accident was matter of fresh trouble to the senate, who, being obliged to regulate their sentiments and conduct according to those of the Emperor, were now obliged to express as much affliction as they did joy before. They proposed to immortalize the young princess, build temples in honour of her, and appoint a priest to officiate daily. In short, they carried *their flattery and submission to the utmost degree of impiety*. Poppæa's affliction was much keener and far more just; for, if Nature had been silent upon this occasion, her interests required that she should sincerely lament the death of this child, because, by its birth, Nero's usual fickleness of temper seemed to be much changed for the better. Besides, her having a child had done much to win her the hearts of the Romans in general, which had been much alienated from her by the murder of Octavia. The Empress, however, proved with child again, which renewed her hopes, and in all probability would have crowned her desires as well as those of the Empire, if Nero had suffered her to die a natural death.

This prince had long since shut his ears against the wise remonstrances of good people, and had given himself up entirely to the pernicious flattery of mercenary courtiers, who laboured for their own advantage, and not for the honour or interest of the Emperor, who amused himself with such things as were quite below his dignity, and thought of nothing but his dancing, plays, and music, in all which he affected to excel the rest of

mankind. But his greatest ambition was to drive a chariot; this piece of folly he carried so far, that he left Rome, and took a long journey into Greece, on purpose to show his skill and address, as we shall see presently.

Poppæa, not being able to endure that the Emperor should thus lower himself, and employ all his time in such low exercises, which exposed him to the laughter and ridicule of the world, endeavoured to reclaim him, by condemning those vile and mean occupations, which brought an indelible stain upon his glory and the imperial dignity. To this purpose she employed her prayers, caresses and tears, but all in vain. She next had recourse to reproaches and raillery, but this method, instead of producing a good effect, proved fatal to her. For the unnatural prince, not being able to bear some provoking expressions used by Poppæa in reference to his driving a chariot, gave her such a kick¹ on the belly that she died immediately.

When the Emperor had recovered from the transports of his fury, he was inconsolable. He caused all imaginable honours to be paid her body, which was embalmed after the manner of those of the ancient kings. It was carried with great pomp and magnificence to the mausoleum that was erected for the Julian family; and if Pliny is to be credited, more perfumes were consumed on her funeral pile, than Arabia produces in a year.² In short, as if the Emperor had a mind to make her amends for the life he had deprived her of, he made her a goddess, and caused divine honours to be paid her. Her funeral panegyric was pronounced with great form and cere-

¹Tacit. Ann. 16. Sueton. vit. Ner. Xiphilin.

²Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 12. c. 18.

mony, in which her transcendent beauty was not forgotten. Nero seemed more in love with her after death than before, if possible; his passion was then as infamous, as it had been violent in her lifetime; and the laws of modesty will not permit us to relate the manner in which history ¹ affirms that this libidinous prince treated the person of his freedman Sporus, whose face had some resemblance to that of Poppæa.

¹ Aurel. Victor. Epitom. Sueton. vit. Ner. Xiphilin.

MESSALINA

THIRD WIFE OF NERO



ONE of the Emperors' reigns could be compared to Nero's for the first five years, which merited the praises of all historians, insomuch that Trajan, who was himself so great a prince, affirms that the beginning of Nero's reign might serve as a model for all kings to imitate.¹ The manner in which he intended to govern, and the rules he laid down to regulate his conduct were so approved of by the senate and all the people, and gave them so high an idea of the happiness of his reign, that they were ordered to be engraven on a tablet of silver. Augustus was the pattern he was to copy; and to show that he intended to be an exact imitator of that excellent prince, he obliged himself² to perform some action of generosity, clemency, or liberality every day. Persons who were in affliction might depend upon finding a sure refuge with him. He eased the people by the suppression of new taxes, and by a diminution of the old ones. He supported indigent virtue and nobility (made contemptible through poverty), by delivering from misery and wretchedness those senators of illustrious birth, who by the vicissitudes of fortune were be-

¹ Aurel. Victor. *Epitom.* in Ner.

² Sueton. *vit.* Ner. c. 12.

come extremely poor, and by his liberality enabled them to maintain their dignity with honour and credit. In short, he made such necessary and beneficent regulations, that the senate, being charmed with so glorious a prospect, returned him public thanks in due form; but Nero, with inimitable grace and modesty, said he had not yet been so happy as to deserve them.

Such a gracious and commendable beginning would (one would imagine) have been attended with glorious consequences, as it seemed the certain forerunner of a happy reign. Each person flattered himself with the hopes of enjoying an uninterrupted good fortune, and Nero was generally looked upon as the most valuable present of the gods, sent to reëstablish the public felicity, and renew the Augustan age. But this Emperor did not long answer the great expectations that all the world had conceived of him. His manners changed with his fortune, and he divested himself of his good qualities, in proportion to the encouragement he gave to flatterers, becoming wicked with them by contagion. He suffered himself to be hurried on by a bad example, and at last giving himself up to all manner of crimes, he clearly proved that, from Ahenobarbus and Agrippina, nothing could proceed but what was pernicious and detestable.

After he had shaken off the intolerable yoke of his mother's authority and that of his preceptors, which placed him under a grievous restraint, all those shameful vices, which rendered him the scourge of Rome and the republic, broke out like a torrent. Instead of Augustus, who at first he declared should be his model, Caligula, the worst of all the Emperors, was the person he said he was resolved to imitate; he kept his word, for he sur-

passed him in all sorts of wickedness to that degree, that his name, which before furnished an idea of a most accomplished prince, incurred afterwards such hatred and public execration, that it became the expression and image of a detestable tyrant; so that whoever was afterwards to be branded with that infamous character was called a Nero.

His monstrous lewdness defiled every part of his body. He invented such brutal pleasures as were never thought of before, and there was neither ¹ condition, relationship nor sex, that could be secure from the infamous and abominable flames of his incontinence. His horrible cruelties filled Rome with blood and tears. He put ² his aunt Domitia to death, to possess himself of her estate; though this lady was so extremely old, that, if he had had but a little patience, it must have fallen to him in due course. Rubellius Plautus, his near relation, was afterwards sacrificed to his jealousy, though he had retired to Asia, that he might give no offence to Nero; but this voluntary banishment did not protect him, for the barbarous Emperor sent emissaries thither on purpose to assassinate him, with orders to bring his head to Rome. He indulged himself in the base and poor satisfaction of examining it, and adding insult to cruelty, said, in a jocose way, that he did not think Rubellius had so large a nose. Pallas was also the object of his cruelty and avarice; for Nero had him poisoned, in order to seize the immense riches of this freedman, who had insolently abused his good fortune, and accumulated prodigious wealth by rapine and oppression, which he forfeited by

¹ S. Chrysost. advers. Vituper. vite Monast.

² Sueton. vit. Nero. Tacit.

an untimely end, a just punishment for having put so many persons to death in order to glut himself with their spoils. After having made the citizens of Rome sufficiently sensible of his inhumanity, he exercised his fury against Rome itself, destroying its magnificent buildings, temples, and palaces,¹ by setting the town on fire, which he contemplated with great pleasure from the top of a tower, and saw preying with raging violence and impetuosity upon the most sumptuous edifices in the noblest streets in Rome, which he said gave him an agreeable notion of the burning of Troy. Nothing could better paint his character than this burning of Rome,² on purpose to gratify his diabolical curiosity, and that he might also be thereby furnished with an opportunity of indulging the implacable hatred he bore the Christians, whom he accused of this horrible action, and so threw the blame upon them, punishing those poor innocent people for a crime that nobody was capable of but himself.

To attempt to give particular details of all the crimes this infamous prince was guilty of, would be an endless task. It is sufficient for our purpose to say, that after having shed the blood of Britannicus, his mother, and his wife Octavia, in order to marry Poppæa, whom he also killed as has been related, he soon after resolved to marry again, and at first had thoughts of Antonia, his first wife's sister, and his own sister by adoption. But Antonia was not so charmed with the dazzling pomp and magnificence of a throne (however captivating it may seem to vulgar eyes), as to accept his proposal; for she was very sensible that, notwithstanding its splendid

¹ Dio. Tacit. Sueton.

² Baronius.

outside, which makes it so ardently desired by ambitious people, it generally produces innumerable troubles and vexations, and that this exalted post, so much coveted, is surrounded with dangerous precipices. These judicious reflections induced her to refuse the offer of Nero, whose brutal temper she could not but be very well acquainted with.

It cannot be denied that Antonia's conduct upon this occasion was the height of prudence. The misfortunes of Octavia and Poppæa were terrible examples for her, and as she had a right way of judging in all things, she looked upon the treatment those two Empresses had met with to be no other than what she might herself expect; for which reason she steadily persisted in her determination never to marry a prince with whom she could not be an hour in safety. This refusal cost her her life,¹ for Nero, whose impetuous desires would admit of no contradiction, accused her of having designs against the Empire, and upon this accusation (which was supported by no sort of proof) put her to death.

His choice fell upon Messalina, grand-daughter of Statilius Taurus, who, in Augustus's time, had been honoured with a triumph and the consulship.

This lady was famous in Rome on account of her great riches and her wit; and though she had had already three husbands, from whom she was separated by death or divorce, she was yet very beautiful. These good qualities procured her abundance of admirers, and in spite of certain suspicions about her virtue, she managed to provide herself with a fourth husband.

This was Atticus Vestinus, Nero's companion in all

¹ Sueton. vit. Ner. Tacit. Ann.

his debaucheries, and sharer of all his secrets. This senator had the skill to insinuate himself so far into the Emperor's good graces, and to acquire such a degree of familiarity with him, that he frequently took the liberty to pique him by the most cutting raileries. Nero did not tolerate it without a good deal of impatience, but as he had trusted Vestinus with all his affairs, and had entirely opened his heart to him, he dare not reprimand him, for fear he should reveal the shameful secrets he had become acquainted with. Vestinus, however, when he married Messalina, was not ignorant that Nero had made very free with that lady. Their gallantry was so much talked of at Rome, that it is not at all probable that Vestinus should have been the only one that knew nothing of it, for she regarded her reputation so little in that affair, that she made no manner of secret of it, nor did she think proper to carry her scruples so far as to put her honour in competition with her fortune; accordingly she laid herself out to attract him as much as possible, being sensible that this amour could not but furnish her with the means of gratifying her vanity to the utmost. But, as she had but small hopes of succeeding in all her ambitious schemes, she prevailed upon herself to take up with Vestinus for her fourth husband, who paid very dear for the honour of marrying the Emperor's mistress, for Nero resented it so much, that he waited only for a fair opportunity to destroy him.

This he thought offered itself very opportunely in the poisoning conspiracy which was fatal to so many honest men. But as there was not the least shadow of proof that Vestinus had had any hand in that plot, nobody could be found willing to accuse him. Nero being at last quite

weary of seeing a man live whom he hated mortally (especially since he was now at liberty by Poppæa's death to marry Messalina), ordered his veins to be opened, without seeking for any further pretence, and by that means got rid of a person, who from being his greatest favourite, was become extremely odious to him. Vestinus was at table in his own house, entertaining a great number of his friends at supper, when the instruments of Nero's cruelty came thither to put him to death. They forced him into a warm bath, and opened his veins so that he bled to death.

This tragical event did not cost Messalina many tears, as she was sure that Nero would soon make her amends for her loss. He did so in fact, for he married her, and caused her to be honoured with the glorious title of August. This new Empress at first found great charms in the brilliant lustre of the throne, but soon after perceived it to be full of cares and anxieties. Nero's irregular conduct was an inexhaustible source of bitterness, which Messalina was the more sensible of, as she was forced to lament in secret, and without complaining, for fear that her remonstrances, if she should venture to make any, might prove as fatal to her as they had been to Poppæa, whose place she filled; for Nero was no longer capable of following wholesome advice, being entirely guided by his extravagant desires and caprices.

The Emperor, not being satisfied with the crimes he had already committed, added fresh murders to those he was already stained with, and under pretence of punishing such as had been engaged in Piso's conspiracy, filled Rome with blood. Silanus Vetus, and all his family were the objects of his rage; Annæus Mela, Seneca's brother,

and father of the poet Lucan perished under his accusation, as well as Petronius, the most agreeable debauchee of his time; Pætus Thræsea, the senator, famous for his great offices and dignities, in which he acquitted himself with honour; Barea Soranus, illustrious for his nobility and high station, as well as for his firm and immovable probity, precious remains of ancient Roman virtue; Corbulo, in whom was also to be seen a true image of old Rome, being the firmest support of the empire; Seneca, and a vast number of others of the first rank, augmented the number of victims that this tyrant sacrificed to his cruelty.

Messalina had many other reasons for the trouble and vexation she underwent from the conduct of Nero; his follies and extravagances continually prepared for her fresh matter for sorrow and discontent. His having passed his youth in singing, driving chariots, and music, might be excused; but even when he became Emperor, nothing would satisfy him but displaying his abilities in such low exercises as were not at all suitable to his dignity, and this upon such occasions as most required that he should put on a gravity conformable to his rank, for example, before Tiridates, who was come to Rome on purpose to receive from the hands of the Emperor the crown of Armenia. On this occasion, Nero, being unable to restrain himself for any considerable time, as soon as the ceremony of the coronation was over, took this king to the theatre, and in his presence, having clothed himself in green, must needs show his skill in driving a chariot, not being at all ashamed to degrade himself by those mean occupations. But however unworthy they were of an Emperor, there

was no lack of sycophants and flatterers, who extol even the vices and greatest faults of princes, who mightily commended his great address and activity; Nero, being then persuaded that it was a pity to shut up such rare talents inside Rome, resolved to give proof of them in foreign countries, in order to obtain the crowns that were given to the best performer in driving chariots, acting, the best singer and the best player on the harp, for this was his greatest ambition. He could not bear that anyone should dispute these glorious titles with him, and it would have been very dangerous to become his rival. He accordingly left Rome, and stopped in all the towns upon the road. He there publicly exhibited himself to the people in all the squares and theatres, and most ridiculously displayed to all the world that great skill and address he so much prided himself upon, supplicating the approbation of all the spectators; and, after having gone through all Achaia, he returned to Rome, loaded with one thousand eight hundred crowns,¹ which he was more proud of than if he had gained as many victories over the greatest enemies of the republic.

These unworthy occupations did not stop the course of his cruelties and lewdness, for he never desisted from them but in order to spill the blood of some citizen, or dishonour some illustrious family. He filled up the measure of his iniquity at last, and there was no way of reckoning up his crimes but by the number of his actions. This tyrannical government caused the provinces to re-

¹ The Romans honoured with a crown those who had distinguished themselves in war, fighting in the capitol, public sports, any particular science, or even combats in the amphitheatre. As these crowns were given upon different occasions, they were made of different materials. There were ten kinds of them.

volt, and decided them to shake off the intolerable yoke. Vindex, governor of Celtic Gaul, was the first that declared against Nero. Galba, who commanded an army in Spain, and Otho, governor of Lusitania, did the same, and their example was followed by the people of Rome, who were resolved to withdraw their allegiance from a prince who had made himself odious to all the earth. Galba was proclaimed Emperor by the legions, and this election was confirmed by a decree of the senate, who declared Nero an enemy of the republic, and condemned him to death.¹ He was informed that there was a most painful and ignominious end preparing for him; and seeing himself hated by all the world, betrayed by his subjects, and finding no compassion from anybody, not even in the hearts of those who had been partakers with him in his crimes, he killed himself, that he might not fall into the hands of those who were in quest of him to sacrifice him to the public hatred, and before he gave the fatal stroke, he cried out, what a pity it was that so skilful an artist should perish in such a miserable manner.

Nero was at dinner when the news of the revolt of the armies was brought him. He tore the letters to pieces, upset the table, and broke two Corinthian vases of immense value, which he called Homeric, because of

¹ Nero hearing that the senate had declared him an enemy to the republic, and condemned him to be punished, according to the ancient form [*more majorum*], asked what was meant by the ancient form. He was told that the criminal was to be stripped quite naked, his head placed between the two arms of a pitch-fork, and whipped till he expired; afterwards he was to be thrown down the Tarpeian rock, and then dragged with a hook and thrown into the Tiber. This made him tremble, and one of those that were with him having advised him to forestall all these indignities to which his body would be exposed, by courageously putting an end to his own life, Nero answered that he should be extremely obliged to him if he would show him the way.

the verses of Homer which were engraven upon them. Then, enclosing in a golden box some poison which was prepared by Locusta, he went to the Servilian gardens, whence he despatched some of his most faithful freedmen to Ostia to secure a ship, with orders to have it always in readiness. He endeavoured to persuade the tribunes and captains of his guards to accompany him in his intended flight, but some made scruples and difficulties, and others absolutely refused.

He formed a great many designs, without being able to come to any resolution, hesitating whether he should take refuge among the Parthians, or throw himself upon the mercy of Galba by appearing before him as a suppliant. Sometimes he thought it would be best that he should show himself in public at the orators' tribunal in deep mourning, in order to excite the compassion of the people, of whom he intended to ask pardon for all his past faults; and if he should find it impossible to obtain forgiveness, to request that at least they would leave him the government of Egypt. In fact, a speech that he had composed for that purpose was afterwards found among his papers; but it is thought that his fear of being torn to pieces by the mob prevented his adopting that course. However it was, he resolved to defer his further deliberations till the next morning, and in the meantime went to bed, but awoke about midnight. Perceiving that his guards had quitted their posts, he got up immediately, and sent some of his friends for information, but not hearing from anybody, he went out into the streets, attended by a few persons, and knocked at several doors; but finding everywhere a profound silence, he returned to his chamber, where somebody had been in his absence

and carried off his bedclothes, and the golden box that had the poison in it.

In this wretched condition he sent about for Spicillus or some other gladiator, to put him to death, for he could meet with nobody that would do him this last piece of service. "What then," said he, "have I neither friend nor enemy?" and then ran as if he was determined to throw himself into the Tiber.

But changing his mind he looked about for some secret place to hide himself in, till he could consider a little what was best to be done. Upon this, one of his freedmen, named Phaon, offered him a little house he had four miles from Rome; so (bare-footed as he was, having nothing on but his shirt and an old ragged cloak that somebody had thrown over him, with which he covered his head) he held a handkerchief up to his face, and mounted a horse, accompanied only by four persons, of which number his beloved Sporus was one.

He had scarcely set out when he felt the earth trembling under him, and was horribly terrified with dreadful flashes of lightning. As he passed near the camp, he heard the soldiers cursing him with bitter imprecations, and wishing prosperity to Galba. He met some persons on the road, who said to each other, "These people are pursuing Nero." One asked him, "What news of Nero at Rome?" and, his horse starting at the same time, his face was uncovered with the shock, and he was recognised by one of the guards, who saluted him. Coming to a narrow by-way, they were forced to quit their horses among bushes and briars, with which Nero's feet were much wounded, notwithstanding the clothes that they had wrapped about them, and with great difficulty got at

last to a wall that was just over against the house. They had not however an opportunity of entering it secretly, so that Phaon advised him to conceal himself for a while in a cavern where gravel had been dug, but Nero said that he would not be buried alive; and being very thirsty, he was forced to take some water out of a ditch with his hand. He then sat down, and fell to pulling the thorns out of his cloak, which was all in tatters with them, and was afterwards obliged to creep upon all fours like a beast, through a narrow hole in the wall, which they had made on purpose. As soon as he had got into a little room, he threw himself upon a bed, where there was nothing but an old blanket and a wretched bolster; and as he was very hungry and dry, they brought him a piece of black bread, but he would not eat it, so was content with a draught of warm water.

All those that were present solicited him to anticipate, by a voluntary death, the evils and insults with which he was threatened; accordingly he caused a grave to be made before his face, and ordered that it should be covered with a piece of marble, if any could be procured. He also gave directions for water to be procured to wash his corpse, and wood to burn it. He wept at every word, with repeated lamentations that so skilful an artist should ever die. In the meantime, a courier arrived to give him notice that the senate had declared him an enemy to the State, and that he had been condemned to die after the ancient manner. He enquired what sort of punishment that was, and being told that the criminal was stripped naked, his neck fastened to a post with the arms of a pitch-fork, and in this posture, was whipped till he expired, he fell into a terrible horror;

and, in order to avoid so dreadful a death, resolved to be his own executioner. He therefore took two poniards into his hand, but, after feeling the points of them, put them up again, saying, that his last hour was not yet come. Sometimes he would entreat Sporus to bewail and lament his miserable fate, and then turning to all about him, would beg that some one of them would kill himself and show him an example, for otherwise he would never have the courage and resolution to do it. In the midst of this perplexity, he heard the horses' feet of those who were come to apprehend and conduct him to Rome. He then pronounced a Greek verse, the sense of which is, "a confused noise of horses strikes my ears," and repeating these words, he took the poniard again, and attempted to kill himself, but having neither strength nor heart to do it, he was assisted by Epaphroditus his master of petitions.

The moment he received the mortal stroke, the captain entered the room, and pretending to have come to his assistance, endeavoured to stop the bleeding. But Nero, looking at him, said, "It is too late: is this your fidelity?" Saying these words he expired, his eyes starting out of his head in a most frightful manner.

He had strictly charged those who were near him, that his head should not be given to anyone, but that his body should be burnt entire. Icelus, Galba's freedmen, granted his request, though he was but just come out of prison, into which Nero had thrown him, as soon as the revolt was known.¹

The delights of a court and the charms of a throne had made too powerful an impression upon Messalina's

¹ Sueton.

mind, not to inspire her with a strong desire to enjoy them again. She even flattered herself with those golden hopes, especially when Otho (to whom she had not been indifferent) wrote her very tender letters, full of esteem and affection. And it is certain, that he had resolved to marry her, and waited for nothing but to carry out successfully the designs he had upon the Empire; but this hasty joy of Messalina did not last long, nor did Fortune perform for this princess what she had seemed to promise her. She frequently raises people only in order to precipitate them so much the lower, and accordingly abandoned Otho, when he had the greatest need of her; and, as if she had repented of having exalted him to the throne after the death of Galba, she immediately hurled him down again; or rather, Providence would not permit that Otho should long remain in quiet possession of the throne, which he had acquired by a horrible murder, as if it were to convince ambitious people, that nothing is less durable than a usurped power, and that the diadem rests upon a very precarious foundation, when placed upon a guilty head. In fact, after Galba had been assassinated by Otho's treason, the Empire became in a manner a prey to whoever took a fancy to it. Vitellius was proclaimed Emperor at Cologne, but Otho's party was the strongest, because he had the city of Rome on his side. He did not however make the most of his advantage, for, instead of waiting for several legions that were coming to join him from Illyria, he went to meet Vitellius, and offered him battle. He was not even present himself at the action, which was the cause of his ruin, for his army, not being encouraged by their chief, was entirely defeated. As soon as Otho heard of it,

he killed himself through despair, that he might not survive his misfortune; but left an affectionate letter for Messalina, in which he bade her adieu for ever.

The same blow that put an end to Otho's life destroyed Messalina's hopes. This princess's ambition might be said to have been extinguished in Otho's blood; for, seeing all her projects brought to nothing by the death of him who, she imagined, would promote her again to the throne, she gave herself entirely up to the study of oratory, for which she possessed all the natural *qualifications*, and gave sufficient proofs of it by orations which she delivered in public. These were so full of learning and erudition, that the most famous orators of her age might have been proud of them; and in this occupation she passed the rest of her life.

LEPIDA

WIFE OF GALBA



THE Emperor Servius Sulpicius Galba united in his person two of the most illustrious families of Rome. He was related¹ to the Empress Livia, who took him particularly under her protection, and advanced him to the highest employments, which he obtained before he arrived at the age prescribed by the laws. For a long time he was called Livius Ocella, which name he took from Livia Ocellina, whom Galba his father had for his second wife. This lady, though very rich and handsome, condescended to make great advances to Galba the father, upon account of his nobility, though he was of small stature, very ill made, and even hump-backed, which defects of nature he took care to conceal as much as possible by wearing a robe that was very wide and long, and high-heeled shoes. Ocellina, however, did not esteem him a whit the less for these defects, though informed of them by Galba himself, who made no secret of them to her; for being resolved she should have no reason to reproach him with having deceived her, he took her one day aside, and putting off his robe, made her observe all the above-mentioned

¹ Sueton. vit. Galb. Plutarch. vit. Galb. Tacit. Hist. lib. i. c. 13.

deformities. This sincerity, which is so little practised, so won over Occlina, that she preferred him to the rest of her admirers, and married him; but having no children by him, she adopted Servius Galba, whom he had by his first wife, Mummia Achaica, who is the person of whom we are now speaking.

Galba had many lucky presages which promised him the Empire. Augustus¹ one day assured him of it. Tiberius² said openly, that Galba would reign in his old age; and a soothsayer foretold, that one of his family would be Emperor, but that it would not happen very soon, which made Galba say, that it would be so when a mule brought forth young. This prodigy came to pass, however; and, after that Galba reckoned upon it as a certainty.

With all these advantages, added to his immense riches and great hopes, Galba might have made his choice among the ladies, and many considerable offers were made him, but he found so much merit, wisdom and modesty in Lepida, that he infinitely preferred her to the others, and married her. He had no reason to repent it, for Lepida fully answered his expectations, repaying his esteem with the most tender affection. Her virtue and fidelity were always such as to give no room for censure or detraction. They lived together with mutual satisfaction and happiness, when Agrippina, whose mind was filled with ambitious projects, and who was looking about for somebody to assist her in the accomplishment of them, took it in her head to select Galba, as a proper person for her purpose, and hoped to prevail upon him to divorce his wife Lepida, in order to marry her.

¹ Sueton. vit. Galb.

² Tacit. Ann. 6.

Agrippina was then widow ¹ of Domitius Ahenobarbus her first husband. To her royal birth she added the most captivating beauty, a lively wit, and an unbounded ambition, which was founded upon the highest pretensions. She wanted nothing but a husband as ambitious as herself, who might act in concert with her in promoting her views and designs, and imagined Galba to be just such a man, on account of his nobility, high office, and vast influence at Court, but especially, the happy prognostications of his future grandeur.

In order to succeed in this important undertaking, from which she had formed such hopes and expectations, she was of opinion, that it would be best to dispense with those ordinary formalities and rules which the laws of decency seem to require, and which do not admit of ladies making the first advances. She therefore got over all those scruples; and being afraid of losing her fortune if matters were to go on in the ordinary course, she was resolved she would have no reason to reproach herself with having missed her aim, by adhering too strictly to fashions and customs, and therefore made no difficulty about taking the first steps in this affair, and that in the most passionate manner.

Galba, who saw into her very heart, knew how to make the proper distinction between real affection and policy; and knowing the deep designs of this princess, he was determined not to serve as a tool for her ambition; so, in order to let her see that he was not to be imposed upon by her deceitful behaviour, he affected to show as much indifference as she had weakness. Besides, Galba had no sort of inclination to part with Lepida, whose

¹ Sueton. vit. Galb.

virtue and prudence he was so well acquainted with, in order to marry Agrippina, whose husband he knew would be exposed to all her infidelities, and many other disagreeable trials, as were Passienus and Claudius.

Agrippina, however, was not discouraged. She employed the whole force of her beauty, which was very dangerous when armed with all the charms that a woman knows how to make use of, when she has a mind to please; and wherever Galba went, she was sure to be there, with all that art and nature could furnish, to captivate his heart.

He never had been exposed to such formidable enemies before; but they found him so strictly on his guard, owing to the high idea he had of Lepida's virtue, and the bad opinion he had conceived of Agrippina, that those powerful darts, which had been fatal to so many others, were launched in vain at him, and Agrippina found herself reduced to the melancholy condition of striving to no purpose.

Any person but Lepida would have been alarmed, and would certainly have been apprehensive that Galba would at last yield to those charms which were almost irresistible, and think himself obliged, like a man of gallantry and politeness, to make a suitable return, but she showed no signs of jealousy; on the contrary, she gave her rival full scope, without fearing that Agrippina's endeavours would work the least alteration in her husband's heart. Her mother was not quite so easy. This lady, who was extremely shrewd, and knew Agrippina to be capable of using every stratagem to seduce her son-in-law, was tormented with that jealousy of which Lepida had not been susceptible, and conceived such a

hatred against Agrippina, that she could scarcely keep it within bounds. She managed however to smother it for some time, but being at length weary of swallowing this vexation in silence, she was resolved it should break out on the first opportunity; and soon after, chance furnished her with a very favourable one.

She happened to be at an assembly of ladies where Agrippina was one of the company. They were talking of indifferent subjects, but Lepida's mother¹ artfully turned the discourse upon Agrippina's fresh gallantry, and rallied her upon it, with a malicious kind of affectation. Any other person would have been put out of countenance; but she, who was mistress of great assurance, and was so proud as not to know what it was to yield to anybody, instead of cunningly evading the snare that was laid for her, defended herself with great heat and fury, and turned the conversation more and more upon that topic. The raillery became serious. Lepida's mother, excited by her jealousy and resentment, reproached Agrippina with her shameful attempt upon Galba, the scandalous advances that she made him, and the artifices she continually employed to gain her point. Agrippina, who was not easily put to silence, replied in the most provoking terms she could think of. The dispute grew exceedingly warm, a quarrel ensued, and at last open war. From words they came to invectives, then to the most abusive language they could invent, and at last to downright blows. Never was there a more diverting scene; the other ladies interposed, in order to separate the two heroines, and by their prudence hindered the combat from lasting long. Victory did not

¹ Sueton. vit. Galb.

declare itself on Agrippina's side, for she went away very roughly handled by her antagonist, so that Lepida's mother remained mistress of the field of battle.

If Agrippina could have prevailed upon herself to have as much regard to decency as ambition, she would never have behaved in such a manner to Galba as made her the jest of the whole town; but she was not of a humour to be governed by the dictates of reason. The distinguished rank of Galba, his important offices and high expectations, gave her such flattering ideas, that she was convinced she could not build her hopes upon a better foundation than the fortune of that senator and a union of herself with him by marriage. She had been so accustomed to make conquests in Rome, that she had very few doubts as to the success of this; nor did it enter into her imagination, that Galba would be able to resist the power of her charms, to which so many others had yielded without making any great resistance.

But Galba, who knew Agrippina perfectly well, and who looked upon this behaviour of hers either as a sign of shameful weakness, or an artifice due to her ambition, despised all her attempts, and showed her, by his indifference, that he had no sort of inclination for her.

Agrippina perfectly perceived it; for Lepida being dead, and also her two sons, Galba resolved never to marry again; he therefore obstinately¹ refused all the offers that were made him, and preferred the sweetness and tranquillity of a single life, to the troubles, vexations, and many disagreeable accidents that too often happen in marriage. Happy would it have been for him, if he could have been contented to deserve the throne, without

¹ Sueton. vit. Galb.

attempting to be Emperor; but he suffered himself to be blinded by ambition, which proposes to itself nothing less than crowns and sceptres, and generally casts down those whom it has exalted. Thus Galba was hastening to his destruction, and to put an end (upon a throne) to a life already far advanced, which he might have finished quietly and calmly in his private capacity. It was ¹ at Carthagera that he shook off the obedience that he owed to Nero. The several prodigies that promised him success, the flattering predictions that were made him of his future grandeur, the pressing solicitations of Vindex, who commanded in Gaul, and the jealousy of Nero, who had sent orders to the intendants to put him to death, prevailed on him to suffer himself to be proclaimed Emperor; he did not, however, at first accept the title, choosing rather that of Lieutenant-General of the Senate and People of Rome, to show, by this false modesty, that he did not desire the sovereign authority, but that it was only against that of Nero that he declared himself.

Galba was far from being secure in his enterprise, especially after the death of Vindex, who was defeated by the troops of Virginius Rufus, governor of Upper Germany, who being ignorant that Vindex and their general, Rufus, were secret friends, attacked Vindex, who expected no such thing, and who being defeated killed himself from grief and despair; but Galba being informed of Nero's death at Clunia, and that the senate had proclaimed him Emperor, took the road to Rome.

At Narbonne ² he met the deputation from the senate,

¹Plutarch vit. Galb.

²Zonar. Ann. i. Tacit. Histor. i. Plutarch vit. Galb. Dio. lib. 64. Sueton. vit. Galb.

which he received very graciously, but refused Nero's furniture, which they had brought to accommodate him on his journey. This modesty gave them a good opinion of him, but it was soon destroyed by the bloody executions which he caused to be carried out on the road, and his entrance into Rome. To this great severity he added a shameful avarice, which lost him the esteem of the soldiers, who finding themselves disappointed of the money that had been promised them in Galba's name, began to murmur and declare that they were not satisfied with an Emperor that was elected in Spain, independently of the other legions, and that they insisted upon having one who should be agreeable to all the armies.

This was, as it were, a signal for revolt; for Otho, who had flattered himself ¹ that Galba being very old would have adopted him, finding those hopes frustrated by his adopting Piso, was so provoked at this preference (which he reckoned a great injustice, because he had been one of the first that declared for Galba, and had brought over to his interest the country of Lusitania, of which he was governor) that he intrigued with the soldiers against him, and they corrupting others, took part with Otho, whom they saluted Emperor, and brutally assassinated Galba, who, upon the report of their rebellion, had come into camp to appease the tumult.

¹ Tacit. Histor. i.

POPPÆA

WIFE OF OTHO



THO had no other wife but Sabina Poppæa, who has been spoken of already. He was determined to marry Statilia Messalina, Nero's widow, but death prevented him, as we have observed. He reigned but three months and two days, from the 15th of January to the 17th of April.

GALERIA FUNDANA

WIFE OF VITELLIUS



NE has need of great moderation and command of one's passions, not to be very fond of sovereign power; for nothing is more difficult to be resisted than the charms of authority over others, though it is generally attended with circumstances that are disagreeable enough. The almost inevitable dangers which attend ambitious people, the dreadfulness of the fall with which they are threatened, the terrible examples of so many illustrious unhappy persons, who have met with tragical and violent deaths from that exalted position which they have attained after infinite labours, troubles, and (too often) heinous crimes—all these are not strong enough to remove from our eyes that fatal veil that conceals from us all the dangers and uglinesses of an elevated station, and shows us only the fair side of grandeur, by which we are lamentably imposed upon; so that multitudes of people choose rather to be unfortunate in high life (especially upon the throne) than happy in the enjoyment of a calm and quiet, but inferior rank. Agrippina was assured that her son's gaining the Empire would be her ruin, and that he would certainly put her to death; this princess, however, being devoured

by an unlimited ambition which never gave her a moment's rest, consented that Nero should dip his hands in her blood, if she might but have the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing him invested with the imperial robe. She could bear the thoughts of his becoming her murderer, provided that murderer was Emperor.

Sextilia, Vitellius's mother, had very different sentiments. She never wished for her son's exaltation,¹ but looked upon the flattering predictions of his future grandeur as direful omens, that bespoke nothing but misfortunes. And when she saw him general of the army and Emperor, she bewailed his wretched condition. Galeria Fundana, his wife, had no more pride and ambition than her mother-in-law; she ² did not suffer herself to be dazzled with the false lustre of a throne; and whatever ³ a mistaken historian has been pleased to assert upon this subject, this princess, in the imperial palace and in the centre of the greatest pomp and magnificence, was as humble as in her own private chamber before her husband had any grandeur to boast of. Her heart was unalterable and proof against all changes and accidents. It was always the same, and the various vicissitudes of Fortune, which she experienced in every shape, sufficiently justify this character of her.

However flattering the predictions of the astrologers had been, with respect to Vitellius's advancement, neither his father nor his mother were pleased with them, because they foresaw the evils and misfortunes that it would be attended with, and the tragical death he would probably suffer, after a short reign. For this reason they took all the measures they could think of to hinder

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell.

² Tacit. Histor. lib. ii.

³ Dio.

the accomplishment of them, by keeping him out of the way of office, but Fortune betrayed their designs, and we shall see that the very means they made use of to frustrate what the soothsayers foretold only served to fulfil it. They sent him, when a child, to Capreæ, whither Tiberius had retired to hide his abominations. In such an infamous school as this, and under such masters, what sort of lessons could it be expected he would learn? He had nobody to copy but those who served as instruments of the monstrous impurities of the Emperor, so that Vitellius could imbibe nothing but vicious and corrupt principles or an exact imitation of those detestable patterns he had continually before his eyes; and accordingly, it was by an abominable prostitution of himself, that he began that course of wickedness, in which he afterwards became so skilful a master.

His crimes were so many steps, by which he attained to dignities and high offices, because they made him agreeable, and even very dear, to Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, to whom nothing could more effectually recommend any person than great vices. In fact, he obtained the highest offices from those three Emperors. He was made commissioner of the public works, in which he did not acquit himself too honestly; for he was accused¹ of having sacrilegiously stolen the ornaments of the temples, and the gifts that were offered up to the gods, which, being of gold and silver, he applied to his own use, and substituted vessels of copper and brass in their stead. He behaved with a good deal of moderation, when pro-consul of Africa, and when he returned home, married Petronia, daughter of a person who had been

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell.

consul, and by her had a son called Petronianus after his mother, which son was born with only one eye, which disfigured him extremely; he was, however, heir to Petronia, and she prevailed upon his father to give him his freedom. She had a particular reason for taking this precaution; for, knowing Vitellius's disposition to prodigality and debauchery, she was in hopes, by this ceremony, which made him independent of his father, to secure her fortune to her son. But this expedient was to no purpose; for Vitellius, having dissipated all his money in expensive and most extravagant entertainments, and not knowing how to procure more to carry on his excesses, had recourse to the barbarous expedient of murdering his son, to seize his riches. He accused him of having a design to assassinate him; and, to make his story gain credit, he gave out that Petronianus, being touched with remorse for his intended crime, had swallowed the poison himself that he had prepared for his father.

Vitellius and Petronia did not live together upon the best terms in the world, so he divorced her, and as soon as she was at liberty, she married Cornelius Dolabella, a senator of an illustrious family. This hasty marriage provoked Vitellius in the highest degree, and so exasperated him against Dolabella, that even Time, which overcomes all things, could never get the better of it; for as soon ¹ as he became Emperor and had a full opportunity of being revenged, he exercised his power against Dolabella, and cruelly put him to death.

Vitellius did not wait long after his divorce without taking another wife, and married Galeria Fundana,

¹ Tacit. Histor. lib. ii.

whose father had been prætor. She was not remarkable for beauty, but rather the contrary, and spoke thickly; but she had a great share of prudence, moderation and wisdom, and a reputation without reproach. These were rare qualities at a time when vice was in fashion, and at a Court where rules and maxims, quite opposed to virtue and chastity, were consistently followed. The issue of this marriage was Publius Vitellius, who had also an impediment in his speech, like his mother, so much so that he was almost dumb. Fundana also had a daughter, who, after the misfortune of Vitellius, her father, furnished Vespasian with an occasion of showing his generosity, by procuring a very advantageous match for this girl.

Vitellius having, as we observed, made himself master of all sorts of vices in Capræ, gave himself entirely up to debauchery.¹ The detestable examples that he had seen in that infamous island, were the fatal seed which future opportunities brought to maturity, and he found but too many of them in the reigns of Gaius Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, into whose good graces it was impossible to be admitted without being vicious. He worshipped no other god than his belly, and carried his insatiable gluttony to such a pitch, that he consumed all his substance in feasts and entertainments, by which he impoverished himself so much, that when Galba gave him the government of Lower Germany, he had not money to defray the expenses of his journey, nor any resources wherewith to procure them; so after trying all manner of ways to no purpose, he was at last forced to mortgage his house to some farmers of taxes, who

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell. 2.

lent him some money upon it, and lodged his mother and Fundana, his wife, in a very poor apartment.

This expedient, which could not but be grievous to Fundana, did not however extricate Vitellius out of his difficulties, for it was not sufficient for his present necessities; and if Sextilia, his mother, had not sold her jewels, Vitellius would have been forced to stay at Rome, for want of money to set out; he would, even yet, have found it impossible to proceed, if he had not, during the whole journey, subsisted by sharpening and cheating.

This extreme indigence of Vitellius was very mortifying to Fundana, his wife; to be banished from her house by utter poverty must have been very heart-breaking to a lady who had always lived in great affluence; but those excessive expenses naturally lead to ruin and destruction. Luxury, intemperance, and the gratification of those unbounded appetites, cannot fail of bringing along with them poverty and wretchedness.

Galba's making choice of Vitellius to command the troops in Germany surprised all the world.¹ Everybody knew that he was neither worthy nor capable of it. In reality, he² had never done anything in his life, but eat and drink, gamble, perfume himself, and plunge into the most infamous pleasures. He had a base soul, given to flattery and incapable of any sentiment of honour. He was insolent, brutal, and even cruel, to those that yielded; timid and supple to those that resisted. Those who have a mind to justify Galba for singling him out from the rest of mankind for the above-mentioned post, say that in Vitellius he imagined he had found a man from whom he had nothing to fear, as he would never

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell.

² Eutrop. Sueton. Tacit. Ann. xiv. c. 49.

be at leisure to intrigue, on account of his gluttony, which required whole provinces to satisfy it.

Vitellius was received in his government with great demonstrations of joy. He affected a certain¹ air of popularity, which won him the hearts of all, especially those of the soldiers, who not being at all pleased with the severe and covetous temper of Galba, and always desirous of changes and novelties, saluted him Emperor, and gave him the surname of Germanicus. This election came² very opportunely, for it was made but a few days before the news of Galba's death arrived, and Vitellius immediately resolved to go and fight Otho, who, at Rome, had seized upon the throne.

Otho was at once informed of it; and whether he dreaded the event of the war, or through moderation, or perhaps cowardice, he endeavoured to stop Vitellius, by proposing terms of accommodation. He³ wrote him several courteous letters, made him considerable offers, in particular to divide the Empire with him, and marry his daughter. Vitellius answered him very politely, but yet refused the conditions, so that, the negotiations being broken off, they began to lay ambushes for each other. Immediately each endeavoured to strengthen his army as much as possible by seducing the soldiers of his antagonist; afterwards the quarrel ran so high, that they wrote the most insulting letters to each other, filled with the most bitter affronts and invectives, reproaching each other with the greatest crimes, which, in fact, were so many truths, for it was difficult to say which was the

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell. 7.

² Plutarch. vit. Othon. Sueton. vit. Oth. vit. Vitell.

³ Suet. vit. Oth. Tacit. Histor. lib. i. c. 74. Plut. vit. Oth.

more worthless man of the two; and at last they attempted to assassinate each other, but unsuccessfully.

If, during this quarrel between Otho and Vitellius, Fundana was full of fright and alarm for herself and her family, it was not without good reason. She was in Otho's power at Rome, and did not believe him generous enough to resist the strong inclination he had to be revenged on his enemy, in the person of his wife and children. Vitellius himself apprehended it more than once, for he wrote ¹ to Titianus, who commanded in the city for his brother Otho, that if Fundana and his children were ill-treated, he would use him and his sons in the same manner by way of reprisals. But Otho behaved with the greatest politeness upon this occasion, for, instead of doing the least injury to that princess or her children, he took particular care of them; whether it was through generosity or fear, nobody knew; but this conduct, from whatever motive it proceeded, teaches us that one never ought to be revenged on one's enemy by showing resentment to his children or anybody belonging to him.

The issue of the war, however, was not favourable to Otho. His troops were defeated at the battle of Bedriacum; and finding that the legions and provinces (ever ready to join those who enjoy success), declared for Vitellius, he refused to survive his shame, but killed himself, and that with a resolution, that nobody expected from the effeminate life he had led. This united all parties in favour of Vitellius, who was then universally acknowledged. He was in Gaul, when he heard that his generals had gained the victory, and that Otho was dead;

¹ Tacit. Histor. i. c. 75.

and then it was that he began to show himself in his proper colours. At first, indeed, he performed some few acts of clemency and justice, but as this was not at all natural to him, he could not long endure the restraint, and consequently threw off the mask, showing himself as he really was, without the least affectation or hypocrisy. He set out for Rome, and all along the road left evident marks of his gluttony and cruelty, the latter of which cannot be better evinced than by those words, so worthy of a tyrant, that he was heard to utter as he passed over the field where the Battle of Bedriacum had been fought, and which was covered with dead bodies, whose horrible stench infected the air. He rejoiced at the sight of this dismal spectacle, and cried out,¹ "How charming is the smell of an enemy when dead, but a dead citizen has a still more agreeable odour."

The news of Otho's death, and Vitellius's approach, was soon carried to Rome,² by those who desired the honour of being the first messengers of it, to Fundana and Sextilia, the new Emperor's mother and wife.

Everybody strove who should show most complaisance and respect to the two princesses; flattery performed its part, according to custom, and soon declared on the side that Fortune smiled upon; but all this zeal and these honours made no impression upon Fundana, nor upon her mother-in-law. They looked upon the elevation of Vitellius as a snare that Fortune had laid for them, and even as the greatest misfortune that could happen to him, whose downfall they saw approaching in proportion to the increase of his grandeur. The murder of Galba, the untimely end of Otho and the other Emperors that

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell. c. 10.

² Tacit, Histor. ii.

had preceded them, were melancholy presages of what Vitellius had to expect from the Senate, the people, and the legions, who are always disposed to change sides and take part with the strongest. Accordingly, when Vitellius wrote to his mother, assuming the surname of Germanicus, Sextilia said openly ¹ that that was not the name of her son; that she had brought a Vitellius into the world, and not a Germanicus. But Vitellius was not content with taking that name, to which he was in no sort entitled, not having one of that great prince's good qualities, but he must needs confer that honour upon his son, too, and heaped upon him all the honours and dignities belonging to a Cæsar. He even caused all the army to go to meet him, though he was yet but a young child, and almost dumb. This ² was not the only instance of his vanity; it was still more conspicuous in his magnificent entry into Rome, which was the most splendid that had ever been seen, and the more ridiculous, because Vitellius, of all men living, was the least worthy of it. He went to the Capitol with a most splendid equipage, and there finding his mother, saluted her with the title of August. But what was most astonishing was, that he had the insolence to deliver a pompous eulogy of his virtues to the Senate and people, which was what they had never heard of before, and with insupportable impudence laid a particular stress on his sobriety and temperance, even before those who had been a hundred times witnesses of his drunkenness and horrid debaucheries, and who at that very time knew that all the high roads in Italy were crowded with people whose business it was to furnish his

¹ Tacit. Histor. ii.

² Sueton. vit. Vitell. c. ix. Tacit. Hist. lib. ii. c. 89.

table with the most costly and delicious rarities that could be procured from distant countries, to supply the exorbitant luxury of his entertainments. In fact, Josephus does not scruple to affirm that, if he had reigned long, all the revenues of the Empire would not have sufficed to defray the expense of that single item.

An historian ¹ has certainly given a wrong character of him in endeavouring to make him pass for a miser, as there are numerous instances of the contrary. He thought that Nero had been neither lodged nor furnished magnificently enough in his golden palace; and Dion ² gives us to understand that the Empress Fundana was something of that opinion. He says that she entered into the imperial palace with a ridiculous pride, and a contemptible disdain, as thinking none of the rich furniture good enough for her, but, on the contrary, despising everything she saw, notwithstanding what Tacitus tells us of her humility and moderation. According to all appearance, Dion must be mistaken, for it is not at all probable that a woman just come out of a pitiful hired chamber, where she had not the common necessities of life, should in so short a time forget her recent miserable lot, and so suddenly conceive such proud and insolent ideas as to imagine the most precious furniture in the world, which had served so many Empresses, not good enough for her. There is the more reason to suspect Dion's veracity in this particular,³ because it was remarkable that Fundana's behaviour was all of a piece, and ⁴ that she was just the same upon the throne, as she had been in her lowest station. She never affected a

¹ Aurel. Vict. Epit.

² Dio. lib. lxxv.

³ Xiphilin. in. Vitell.

⁴ Tacit. Hist. lib. ii. c. 64.

haughty carriage, never made use of her influence and interest but to do good, and to confer favours, as we read she did in behalf of Trachalus, who wrote Otho's speeches, whose life she saved.

It would have been very well if Vitellius had imitated her, but this prince, being hurried on by his bad conduct, and the violent counsels of Triaria, his sister-in-law, a most insolent, proud, and tyrannical woman, became a monster of cruelty and all sorts of debauchery. He took for his model the reign of Nero, and never was model better copied. Gluttony and inhumanity were the two main hinges upon which all his actions turned. Junius Blæsus,¹ a Senator of great quality, and the most honest man in Rome, fell under the weight of an artful and unjust accusation, and Vitellius, not content with putting him to death, desired to feast his eyes with the sight of his execution. Two sons ² of a man he had condemned, who threw themselves at his feet to entreat his pardon for their father, became his companions in punishment, and were executed together with him whose life they interceded for. Finally, he caused his mother to be starved to death, under the pretence of a vain and idle prediction that had been made him, that he should reign long if he outlived her; as if those who murdered their parents were, in a peculiar manner, to be blessed with long life, whereas it is promised to none but such as honour them. It is true there are people of opinion that Sextilia killed herself, that she might not any longer have the mortification of seeing the scandalous life her son led, and that, foreseeing the misfortune with which he was threatened, she asked poison of him, and he was cruel

¹ Tacit. *Histor.* iii. c. 39.

² Sueton. *vit.* Vitell.

enough to give it her. But, supposing it were so, he would not be less guilty of her death, since even among heathens¹ those were reckoned authors of a crime who did not hinder it when they could.

Never was gluttony carried to such a length as by Vitellius. He always made four, and sometimes five,² plentiful meals a day, to satisfy, if possible, his greedy appetite, which he was sometimes so little master of, that very often, during³ the sacrifices, he could not forbear dragging the entrails of the victims out of the fire and devouring them half-raw in public. It was his custom to invite himself to dine with his friends, which was done at such excessive expense that the least of those entertainments cost immense sums. That which his brother Lucius Vitellius gave him seems incredible, for we read that⁴ two thousand fishes were served up at table, and seven thousand birds, all of choicest quality, besides innumerable other things. But the profusion of this Emperor was never displayed more than at a famous entertainment he gave, where one single dish cost more than all his brother's feast, for he filled it with the livers of pheasants, the tongues of scars, peacocks' brains, the entrails of lampreys, and all sorts of fish and birds that were the most difficult to be procured. All these excesses and prodigalities, which were without bounds or judgment, show us what man is capable of when absolute power is added to depraved and vicious inclinations.

In the meantime, whilst Vitellius was giving himself no trouble about the cares and fatigues of government, but laying that burden upon his freedmen, thought of nothing

¹ Senec. Troas. Act. ii.

² Eutrop. in Vitell.

³ Sueton. vit. Vitell.

⁴ Eutrop. Sueton. vit. Vitell.

but how to satisfy his passions, and passed whole days and nights at table, Vespasian, who was become very illustrious by an infinite number of glorious actions, was proclaimed Emperor, and acknowledged as such throughout all the East. Primus Antonius, one of his generals, at the head of the Illyrian legions, entered Italy, and gained two battles,¹ took and sacked Cremona, and in these three actions destroyed above thirty thousand of Vitellius's men, so that the whole Empire declared for the conqueror, excepting the city of Rome, and even that soon after abandoned Vitellius to his evil destiny.

This prince, being at last roused from his lethargy, saw his danger, but not till it was too late, and did not begin to think himself unfortunate till he was irretrievably lost. Resolving, therefore, to quit his sovereign dignity, and yield it up basely to his antagonist, he went out of the palace in deep mourning,² accompanied by Fundana, his children, and his domestics, his son being carried in a litter, as it were in a funeral procession. In this condition, which inspired with pity even those who had no reason to love him, he passed through the soldiers, and, having assembled them as well as the people, he told them, in very moving words, that he renounced the Empire for the sake of peace, and for the public weal; that he had no other favour to ask of them, but to have

¹ In one of these battles in which Primus Antonius defeated the troops of Vitellius, an accident happened that made both parties curse the civil wars. One of Primus's soldiers having mortally wounded another belonging to Vitellius, and falling upon him to strip him, found him to be his own father. They knew and tenderly embraced each other, which showed the father's affection for the son, and the grief of the son for having had the misfortune to be his father's murderer. The wounded man died, and his son had only the melancholy consolation of burying him who had given him life.

² Tacit. Histor. 3. 67.

compassion on his brother, his wife, and children. At the same time surrendering his sword as a mark of his giving up the sovereign authority, he offered it to the Consul, Cæcilius Simplex, who refused it; he then retired into the Temple of Concord.

It was a very melancholy sight to see the Empress Fundana go out of the palace, leading her little daughter by the hand, and shedding copious tears for her husband, whose unhappy destiny had reduced him so low as to seek for shelter in the compassion of the people. But all these sighs and tears were in vain. Antonius's troops entered Rome, and seized upon the palace. Vitellius, who had also gone thither, and had just risen from one of his usual entertainments, being frightened at the noise which the soldiers made, withdrew secretly and retired to his wife's house, where he had no sooner arrived than he took it into his head to return to the palace, which he found desolate, for all his people had left it. He then hid himself behind a bed in the porter's chamber, where he was attacked by the dogs and cruelly bitten by them till the blood ran down. He was soon¹ discovered, and rudely dragged out of his lurking-place. The soldiers led him about the town with his hands tied behind him, and to complete his confusion they placed the point of a poniard just under his chin, that he might be obliged, whether he would or no, to hold up his head. They affronted him in all the ways they could think of, threw dirt and dung in his face, and called him gormandizer and incendiary, and after they had tormented him and insulted him by all manner of injuries, they put him to a slow and painful death, and then threw his body into the Tiber.

¹ Tacit. Histor. ii. Sueton. vit. Vitell. Eutrop.



From the painting by Georges Rochegros

The populace insulting and tormenting Vitellius in the streets of Rome before putting him to death

Lucius Vitellius, the Emperor's brother, and the young Vitellius, were also sacrificed to the public peace. Mucianus, chief favourite of Vespasian, thought proper to stifle all the seeds of discord in the blood of this young prince. Vespasian was not so rigorous in regard to Vitellius's daughter; he married her very honourably, which was the only consolation of Fundana, who passed the remainder of her life in grief and affliction.

DOMITILLA

WIFE OF VESPASIAN



LAVIA DOMITILLA is less known by her life, which was very obscure, than by the honours that were paid her after her death, and when Vespasian was settled upon the throne. She was daughter of Flavius Liberalis, intendant of the revenues, an employment¹ far above his hopes, for he was of so low an extraction that Domitilla, his daughter, was slave to Capella, a Roman knight, originally an African, till, after he had by long service² qualified himself for the above-mentioned post, his daughter was, upon his account, declared free and a citizen of Rome.

Vespasian was a prætor in Caligula's time, when he married Domitilla. She was not his first attachment, for Cænis, freedwoman of Antonia, Claudius's mother, was the object of his affections for a long time, and he loved her extremely, even when he married Domitilla.

Vespasian being descended from a mean family, would, without doubt, have remained in obscurity, only that evil Fortune has its revolutions as well as prosperity. But Narcissus, who at that time was very powerful at Court, having taken him under his protection, gave him prefer-

¹ Sueton. vit. Vesp.

² Aurel. Vict. Excerpt. in Tit.

ment and advanced him by degrees to considerable offices, which furnished him with opportunities of exercising his rare and valuable talents. It was by his interest that Vespasian was made lieutenant of a legion, at the head of which, in Germany and in Britain, he performed such glorious actions as gained him the highest reputation, and were afterwards recompensed by the priesthood, a triumph, and the consulship. The duties of the latter obliged him to repair to Rome, where he found his wife, Domitilla, brought to bed of a son, whom he called Titus, and who succeeded him in the Empire.

These great honours and distinctions began to arouse Vespasian's ambition, which, together with certain favourable predictions of his future grandeur, flattered him very agreeably, and caused him to think that there was nothing he might not aspire to. Some oracles had promised him the Empire, and he thought his exploits seemed to pave the way for him to that supreme dignity. In reality, two powerful nations conquered, twenty strong towns taken, a considerable island subdued, two battles won, and all this in so short a time, were beginnings illustrious and glorious enough to stimulate the hopes and expectations of a man naturally ambitious, and who, being exceedingly influenced by superstition, was much impressed by what had been foretold should shortly happen to him. But all these hopes, this charming prospect of sovereignty, and these vast ideas, seemed to fall to the ground when Narcissus, who was his patron and only support, was ruined; and, to tell the truth, he and his wife, Domitilla, were nearly undone by this accident, for the Empress Agrippina, having conceived an implacable hatred against Narcissus, involved in her resentment all

his friends and dependents; and after having destroyed her enemy, resolved to do the same by all those of his party. The absolute power she had acquired over the Emperor Claudius made everything easy to her, but as she was desirous to give a sort of colour to her persecutions, she suborned people to accuse of heinous crimes all such as she had a mind to ruin, that it might seem the punishment of transgression rather than of their attachment to Narcissus.

Vespasian, who by¹ having received innumerable favours and benefits from Narcissus, was become very zealous for his interests, plainly perceived that it was by no means safe for him to stay at Rome, where his life was every moment in danger, that Agrippina wanted only a plausible pretence to destroy him, and, according to all appearance, it would not be long before her fertile invention supplied her necessities. He therefore very wisely resolved to retire with his wife, Domitilla, into some remote country. This voluntary banishment saved him, as it procured him a safe shelter against Agrippina's persecutions, and furnished Domitilla with an opportunity of regaining her husband's affections, which Cænis had robbed her of, and both of them had the satisfaction of seeing their family increased by the birth of Domitian and a daughter, who was called Flavia Domitilla, after her mother, but who died soon after.

The storm being over, and Agrippina having satisfied her revenge, Vespasian, weary of a rambling and inglorious life, returned to Rome, which he looked upon as the proper theatre for him to display his talents in, and raise himself afterwards to the highest dignities; but

¹ Sueton. vit. Vespas.

Fortune had a mind to try him once more, and make him sensible of her caprices. For, during Nero's journey to Achaia, Vespasian, who accompanied him, had the misfortune to displease the Emperor by falling asleep whilst he was singing. Nero was so offended at this want of courtesy that he forbade him his presence. Vespasian was far from being sure that this resentment would not be carried further, and, being well acquainted with the Emperor's violent temper, thought it best to withdraw as soon as he could. He retired again, and continued in exile till the danger was over, which, luckily for him, happened very soon, and Fortune, who would not lose sight of him, made him ample amends afterwards for all his vexations and disappointments.

The Jews,¹ who always looked upon their subjection to the Romans as an insupportable and shameful yoke, notwithstanding the protestations they had made of submitting to no king but Cæsar, being seduced by some vain predictions that seemed to promise them the Empire,² resolved to shake off an obedience that they only rendered with the utmost regret, and upon this foolish supposition they brutally assassinated their Governor. The news ³ of this rebellion put Nero into a strange fury,

¹ Sueton. vit. Vespas. Tacit. Histor. i. c. 10.

² There was among the Jews an old prophecy that the empire of the world was to fall into the hands of certain persons who were to come from the East. And Josephus, the historian, informs us that in Nero's time there was found among some old documents in the temple of Jerusalem, a prophecy which affirmed that about that time should spring up from among the Jews one that should command the whole earth. The Jews did not fail to explain this flattering prediction in favour of themselves, and not doubting but the time of their deliverance was near at hand, they revolted against the Romans. Josephus, like a skilful courtier, put a political construction upon the words, and attributed the meaning of them to Vespasian.

³ Nicephor. Callist. Histor. lib. iii.

and he resolved to extirpate that nation, which neither threats, pardons, nor punishments could influence.

Nero, having need of a skilful general for this important expedition, immediately thought of Vespasian as a man of consummate judgment and experience, and nobody was more capable of answering the expectations that all mankind entertained of him. He therefore put himself at the head of the legions, marched into Judæa, and soon made himself master of all the province, except the town of Jerusalem. During these military operations Vespasian lost his wife. Her death did not make much noise, because there had been nothing very remarkable in her life, so that it was not till flattery was pleased to make her a divinity that Domitilla was much spoken of.

After the death of Nero, the Empire was divided into factions. Galba reigned but a little while, because Otho, who aspired to the sovereignty, had him massacred. However, he did not long enjoy that dignity which he had procured by so great a crime, for he was but a few months upon the throne.

Vitellius having made himself odious by his excesses and horrid debaucheries, Vespasian, who was then at the head of a very considerable army in the East, was proclaimed Emperor. At first he made some difficulty about accepting the sovereign power, which the legions had conferred upon him with so much ardour and zeal, but being at last overcome by the pressing solicitations of Mucianus, Governor of Syria, who promised to give him all the assistance in his power, he took the names of Cæsar and Augustus, and marched towards Rome to give battle to Vitellius, who had dishonoured the Empire by a scandalous, dissolute, and effeminate life.

When he was at Alexandria, some of the inhabitants brought him a blind and a lame man, who desired him to cure them, having, as they said, been assured by the god Serapis that Vespasian had the power of so doing, if he would condescend to touch with the end of his foot the leg of the cripple, and put some of his spittle upon the eyes of the other. The Emperor¹ had too much good sense to give credit to any such vision, and refused to comply with their request, that he might not expose himself to being laughed at, but at last, not being able any longer to resist the importunity of these poor wretches, and the solicitations of his friends about him, he was prevailed upon to do it, and it is confidently reported that they were both immediately healed. This event has been much spoken of, and people have argued different ways about it. As we are in no way concerned in the affair, the reader is at liberty to judge of it as he thinks proper, but those who conclude it to be downright flattery will certainly form the truest judgment of it.

Though Vespasian had a great deal of merit, it is certain that he owed, in a great measure, his advancement to the shameful and iniquitous lives of his immediate predecessors, Otho and Vitellius, especially the latter, who was altogether unworthy of the Empire, and to the two generals who declared for him, and served him with a fidelity, courage, and skill equal to that of the greatest warriors of ancient Rome. Licinius Mucianus² was one of them, of whom it is said that his vices at least balanced his virtues, if they did not exceed them, and that he was fitter to make an Emperor than to become one himself. The other was Primus Antonius, a Gaul, a native of

¹ Tacit. Histor. iv. Sueton. vit. Vesp.

² Tacit. Hist.

Tolosa, who in his childhood was surnamed Becco—that is to say, the bill of a cock. He had been convicted ¹ of great crimes, for which he was expelled the senate, but Galba ² reinstated him without enquiring into the reasons of his expulsion. After this mortifying disgrace, he went and offered his services to Nero, who did not set any great value upon him, but Antonius ³ managed matters so dexterously by his intrigues, that he procured the command of an army. He was exceedingly brave and enterprising, the very man for a bold action. He perfectly understood the art of war, and was intrepid in the greatest dangers; but, on the other hand, he was ill-natured and quarrelsome, loving broils and factions, dangerous in time of peace and idleness, ever ready to plunder and to shed blood. Such were the two generals who made Vespasian Emperor by the extraordinary services they rendered him.

As soon as he arrived in Rome he strove to improve the state of affairs in the city, for everything had undergone a great alteration owing to the troubles and disorders of past times. He rescued from obscurity and oblivion the name of Flavia Domitilla, his late wife, by granting her immortality. Temples were erected to her honour, altars built, and priests instituted, who were called Domitillans. In short, they made an idol of a woman, so that Vespasian's wife, who had scarce been known at Rome in her lifetime, was exalted to the sky by a posthumous honour, and by an impious apotheosis, increased the number of the divinities.

Cænis, the freedwoman, found her account in the advancement of Vespasian, for as he had always loved

¹ Sueton. vit. Vitell.

² Tacit. Ann. 14.

³ Dion. lib. 65.

her, he took her into his palace, and always treated her with as much respect as if she had been his wife. It must be confessed, too, that she was worthy of it, for she had ¹ a vast and extensive genius, capable of the greatest undertakings, and a penetration that nothing could escape. She first perceived and disclosed to her mistress, Antonia, the ambitious designs of Sejanus, of which that princess informed Tiberius. To all these qualities she added a profound policy, and the most discreet conduct, by which she always maintained herself in the good graces of Vespasian, studying his humour and conforming entirely to his inclinations, and as she was well acquainted with this prince's covetous temper, she was very industrious in finding out methods of satisfying the almost insatiable desire he had of amassing money. All the offices ² in the Empire were for sale. The governments of provinces, and the command of the armies were given to those who bid highest. The priesthood, which was a sacred dignity, and the absolution of crimes were bought and sold. A scandalous and sacrilegious traffic was carried on even in such things as belonged to religion. In short, the unworthiest of mankind might aspire to the most honourable and important posts, provided he came with a purse well furnished, and addressed himself to Cænis. Taxes were imposed upon all manner of things, and everywhere the traces of this monstrous avarice were to be seen. Vespasian eagerly seized every opportunity of heaping up riches, and all profit was welcome from whatever quarter it came. His son, Titus, taking the liberty one day to represent to him the shamefulness of laying a tax upon urine, the Emperor, giving him a piece of money to

¹ Xiphilin.² Dio. lib. 66.

smell, told him that it had no bad scent, thought it proceeded from what he so much condemned. About this time Cænis died, to the great regret of Vespasian, who did not long survive her. He sullied the latter part of his reign by the death of Sabinus,¹ whom he put to death

¹The history of Sabinus deserves to be particularly taken notice of or rather the fidelity and conjugal affection of his wife. Sabinus was a person of high rank, very rich, and had a good share of ambition. His wife's name was Eponina, a lady of great virtue and beauty. During the troubles in Gaul, which lasted all the time that Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian were disputing for the Empire, there was scarce a general of an army, or governor of a province that did not imagine he had very good pretensions to the throne; Sabinus was one of those, and suffering himself to be hurried away by his ambition, consented that the army should salute him Emperor. The support that he met with from his countrymen, the inhabitants of Andematunnum (supposed to be the site of the modern Langres) put this bold undertaking into his head: beside, he pretended to be descended from Julius Cæsar, who had had an intrigue with his grandmother during his residence in Gaul. As, in addition to being excessively vain, he was very rash, he turned his arms against the Romans, which revolt had very bad consequences for him. His troops were entirely defeated; and of all those who had joined him, some fled and others killed themselves, that they might not fall into the hands of the Roman generals, who gave no quarter to these rebels, but punished them as their crime deserved. Sabinus might have made his escape into the remote parts of Gaul, where he would have been secure, if he could have prevailed upon himself to abandon his wife, whom he loved extremely, and by whom he was equally beloved. He flattered himself, that in time he might be able to obtain his pardon, and so resolved to conceal himself till the troubles should be over. At his country house there were great subterraneous caves that could not possibly be discovered, except one was let into the secret. In fact, of all Sabinus's domestics, who were very numerous, there were but two of his freedmen (in whom he had entire confidence) who were acquainted with these caves: these he conferred with in private, and acquainted them with his intention to hide himself in one of these caves till he should have a proper opportunity of procuring his pardon; but in the meantime (to hinder any search from being made after him) he proposed to give out that he had poisoned himself. Sabinus therefore assembled all his servants, and told them that after the misfortune that had happened to him in the miscarriage of his attempt, he was convinced that, if he should be so unhappy as to fall into the hands of those who had put all the rest of his party to death, there was no punishment his enemies would think cruel enough for him, for which reason he was determined to destroy himself. He returned them thanks for their services and fidelity, and dismissed them all, except the two confidants. To these he gave proper instructions, and

for a crime which, on account of a nine years' repentance, and the tears of a wife and two young children, deserved

then buried himself in the bowels of this dismal cavern, ordering his house to be set on fire, which was soon consumed to ashes. This action was attributed to Sabinus's despair, especially since the two freedmen reported everywhere that their master, to escape the Emperor's pursuers, had taken poison and then burnt himself in his house, that they might not have the pleasure of insulting his body. What confirmed this story was Eponina's going into deep mourning and being inconsolable for the loss of her husband, for she really believed it to be true, as Martialis, one of the freedmen, had protested to her that it was. She cried and lamented excessively, as any affectionate wife would do, who had been deprived of a husband she loved above all the world. She was visited by all the persons of distinction in the neighbourhood, who did not fail to comfort her in all the ways they could think of; but Eponina, being determined not to outlive this unspeakable affliction, took no nourishment for three days. The news of Sabinus's death was soon spread abroad, and there was nobody that doubted it in the least. Eponina's deep and unfeigned mourning, the house burnt, the servants dismissed, everything contributed to confirm the story. In the meantime, Sabinus was kept well informed of everything that passed by the trusty Martialis, and being afraid that his wife would really die of grief, thought it high time to undeceive her; he therefore despatched his faithful servant to let her know the true state of things, and to entreat her at the same time not to make any alteration in her conduct, lest it might reveal what was of such importance to him to keep secret. So Eponina, carrying on the deceit, wept and lamented as much as ever to all appearance, but her inconceivable impatience to see her dear husband again would not admit of delay; she therefore paid him a visit as soon as it was dark, and returned before day without being perceived by any body. This practice was continued for seven months, but as it could not be carried on any longer without great trouble and danger, she ventured (in order to spare herself the one and avoid the other) to have him carried into the city to a house she hired for that purpose, her own in the country being burnt. He was so well wrapped up among some furniture, that it was impossible to find out the trick; but after a while, reflecting that it might become known by some accident, especially since she was visited by so many people, it was thought wise to remove him again into his den. All this succeeded as well as they could wish, and this lady had, by her discreet and prudent conduct, the satisfaction of seeing her husband as often as she pleased, in his gloomy retreat, during nine years, without the least suspicion of any such thing. But what was most to be admired in this affair was, that Eponina being with child, and very justly apprehending that her pregnancy would soon be taken notice of by the ladies, who saw her at the assemblies or the temples, or especially in the bath, she daubed herself with a certain ointment, which had the property of making the flesh swell, and puffing up the skin; thus, by the size of her legs, arms, and the rest of her body, she perfectly well disguised her big

to be pardoned. This was such an act of severity, or rather cruelty, as could not have been expected from an

belly, which was looked upon as the consequence of her disorder. She afterwards had the courage and resolution to suffer the pains of her delivery without complaining, and to be brought to bed, without the least assistance, of twins, which she nursed herself in the cavern, all the time that Sabinus remained there.

At last, however, Eponina's being so frequently absent created some suspicion, for people began to be persuaded that there must be some mystery in this behaviour. She was so narrowly watched that Sabinus's retreat was discovered. He was immediately arrested, loaded with chains, and conducted to Rome, with his wife and two children. As soon as they appeared before Vespasian Eponina threw herself at the feet of the Emperor, and presenting the twins, told him (with tears running down her cheeks) that long ago she had had a mind to implore his clemency in behalf of her husband, who had been misled by his imprudence, bad advice, the misfortunes of the civil wars, and the desire of being protected against the insupportable oppressions of tyrants; that he had indeed been prevailed upon to make himself the head of a party, for the above-mentioned reasons, rather than from any motives of ambition, or desire of reigning; that she had been frequently tempted to throw herself upon his mercy, and inform him that her guilty husband was still alive, but had waited on purpose till the children she then had the honour to present to him were of an age to join their tears and sighs to those of their afflicted mother, that the number of the suppliants might the more effectually disarm his indignation. "I brought them," said she, "into the world in a kind of sepulchre, and may say that they have never beheld the light till now. Be moved by our tears, our sighs, and our misfortunes, and look with compassion upon our misery."

So melting a discourse, and the melancholy sight of Eponina all this while upon her knees, with her two children, with uplifted hands and broken hearts, begging pardon for their poor father, touched to the very soul all that were present; and nobody doubted but the Emperor would grant the life of Sabinus at the ardent request of an afflicted woman, and the irresistible tears of the two innocents, who besought his pity in so tender a manner. So rare an example of conjugal love even required that Vespasian should give up Sabinus to the generous fidelity and affection of such a wife; but the Emperor was inexorable. He condemned Sabinus to death, in order, by this unseasonable and too rigorous severity, to intimidate others from revolting against their prince.

Eponina seeing her husband lost beyond all hopes, resolved to share with him his last punishment, as she had done all his former sufferings, and putting on a haughty and masculine countenance, told Vespasian with a surprising air of intrepidity, that he might be assured she did not look with horror upon death, since she had had the courage and resolution to pass nine years of her life with Sabinus, in the terrible darkness of a cave under ground, which might properly be called being

Emperor, who, in other respects was far from delighting to shed blood.

buried alive; that she was, even in that lamentable situation, more satisfied than he upon his throne. She then with great boldness reproached him with his cruelty. Thus, after having given an admirable example of fidelity and conjugal love, she showed as remarkable a one of her heroic courage and nobleness of mind.

MARCIA FURNILLA

WIFE OF TITUS



THE Emperor Titus was a prince endued with great virtues, though when a private person he had been very dissolute and debauched. He was educated at Claudius's Court, with Prince Britannicus, where he pursued the same studies, and under the same masters. This was the origin of that great intimacy that existed between them ever after, and nearly proved fatal to Titus, for ¹ he was almost poisoned with Britannicus by tasting the soup that was prepared for that prince.

Titus, when at Court, had a presage of his future grandeur, for one day Narcissus, secretary and favourite of Claudius, sent for a physiognomist to know his opinion with regard to the destiny of Britannicus, and he assured him that Britannicus would never be Emperor, but that the other, pointing to Titus, would.

Titus ² was extraordinarily handsome, which perhaps in some measure influenced the soothsayer in his favour. In his countenance there was a majestic air, mingled with sweetness, which had something in it so noble that anybody would sooner have taken him for a prince than an inferior person. He was ³ extremely skilful at all exer-

¹ Sueton. vit. Tit.

² Tacit. Histor. i. c. 2.

³ Eutrop. lib. 7.

cises, had a wonderful memory, a great facility in composing, both in prose and verse, and was so ¹ dexterous at counterfeiting all sorts of writing that it was impossible to distinguish the true from the false; he used to say, that if he had had a mind, he could have been a very great rogue.

After he had served some time in Germany and Britain¹ as military tribune, he took a fancy to study the law, and pleaded at the Bar; and when he returned to Rome he married Arricidia Tertulla, daughter of a knight, who had been præfect of the prætorian guards; but this lady dying soon after, he married Marcia Furnilla, who was descended from one of the most illustrious families in Rome. He was forced to separate from her in a little time, for Vespasian, his father, being taken up with the conquest of Judæa, employed Titus under him; and afterwards, when he quitted that country, to take possession of the Empire upon Vitellius's death, he left Titus in command of the army, in which position he acquitted himself with all the ability of the most experienced general, performing the duty both of captain and private soldier. He took the city of Jerusalem after a long siege, during which the Jews suffered all that a nation, who had drawn upon themselves the wrath of God, could suffer, and the obstinate resistance offered by that wretched people only served to heighten the glory of the conqueror.² The city

¹ Sueton. vit. Tit.

² During the siege, the Jews suffered all the calamities that can be imagined, especially so dreadful a famine, that a woman was constrained to kill her sucking child, and devour it after it was roasted. The noble and magnificent city was torn up from the very foundations, and Titus caused the plough to pass over it. Above eleven hundred thousand souls perished with hunger and all sorts of hardships during the siege, besides ninety thousand that fell into the hands of the

was taken by assault on the 8th of September, which day was also remarkable to Titus for the birth of a daughter of whom Furnilla was delivered at Rome, who was named Julia; we shall see by the sequel that this young prince did not inherit the virtues of her father.

Titus, however, during his stay in Judæa, was not so taken up with his military occupations as not to find leisure for other matters: his attachment to the Princess Berenice, sister to King Agrippa, employed no small proportion of his time. Her charms made so deep an impression on him that in the excess of his passion he promised to marry her.

After the expedition to Judæa, Titus returned to Rome, covered with laurels. He was received with the greatest demonstrations of joy, and the Senate decreed him the honour of a triumph jointly with his father amidst the applause and loud acclamations of the whole city, which gazed upon him with admiration. But soon after he greatly diminished the favourable idea the people had conceived of him, by his irregular behaviour. He gave himself up entirely to all sorts of vice, and frequently passed whole nights in debauch, with the most dissolute and abandoned of mankind, indulging himself in the most infamous pleasures, and to all these excesses added the greatest degree of cruelty, so that everybody was of opinion that he would make a second Nero.

He was much despised on account of his violent attachment to Berenice, for people could not endure that he should be so extremely fond of a stranger, as they were. Romans when the city was taken, part of whom were sold for slaves and the rest sent to Rome, where they were condemned to hard labour in the construction of a vast amphitheatre.

apprehensive that he designed to raise her to the throne; and the death of Cæcina, a person of great distinction, who had been consul, was attributed to his jealousy. It is true that this action was excused in some measure by the apparent necessity of anticipating the dangerous plans of that ambitious senator, who was sowing the seeds of rebellion among the soldiers; and it was given out that a speech had been found upon him, most artfully composed and calculated to stir up the army to a revolt, which he was to have addressed to the legions. People of the greatest penetration ¹ considered that this was only a pretence made use of by Titus to cover a horrid assassination, and that it really was due to his jealousy, for he imagined that Cæcina was not indifferent to Berenice, and not being able to bear this rival, determined to get rid of him, which he did in a most scandalous manner, quite unworthy of a great prince; for, having one night invited him to supper, he was not ashamed to violate the sacred laws of hospitality so far as to have him massacred as he was retiring from the banqueting hall, in order to go to his house.

It may well be supposed that Titus was too much in love with Berenice to have any great regard for his wife; he therefore easily prevailed upon himself to divorce her, which confirmed people in their belief that he was determined to place his mistress upon the throne. This was such a monstrous innovation that it prejudiced all the world against him; the Romans detested the very thoughts of it, as much as they had abhorred the designs of Mark Antony in favour of Cleopatra, to whom he had promised the Empire.

¹ Excerpt. Aurel. Victor. in Tit.

Titus, however, soon gave people sufficient reason to alter their opinion with regard to his conduct, for, no sooner was he become Emperor by the death of his father than he showed himself the very reverse of what he had been before; it seemed as if he had changed his nature and inclinations together with his fortune. His glory and reputation (with an ardent desire to do everything in his power to please the Romans) were now become his prevailing passions, so much so that the day of his elevation to the throne put the finishing stroke to his love for Berenice, or rather he had virtue enough to deny himself, for this prince, who in contempt of the laws had been a slave to a foreigner, was now become a slave to those laws in opposition to that princess. He bade her therefore depart to her own country, and obliged her to go and hide in Judæa the powerful charms that had captivated him to such a degree. By making such a sacrifice (which no doubt went to his very heart) he was resolved¹ to give an unmistakable proof of the command he had over his passions. Their separation was very moving. Berenice reproached her lover very tenderly, in a manner capable of melting the hardest heart.

She reminded him of all the marks of affection she had given him, and the sincerity of it, which had induced her to quit her own country and travel over so many provinces with a lover that was now so ready to part with her; she reproached him with the promises he had so often repeated, not only to love her always, but even to marry her, which he now had it in his power to do. Titus, on his part, protested that nothing could be so grievous to him as those severe laws of the Empire, which laid him

¹ Sueton. vit. Tit.

under the cruel necessity of banishing from his presence one who was so dear to him. Berenice, overwhelmed with sorrow and despair, was forced to set out for the East, to repent at leisure of her credulity in having accompanied Titus to Rome, in hopes of becoming his wife, which had made her despise reputation and everything that was dear to her. She gave all those of her sex an instructive lesson, and taught them how little they ought to depend upon the flattering promises which lovers are so liberal of in the ardour of their passion, which they generally violate as easily as they make them.

Titus's whole occupation, from that day forward, consisted in endeavouring to make the world happy. All the virtues that were necessary to render a prince perfectly accomplished showed themselves in his conduct and behaviour so conspicuously that he was called "the delight of mankind," a title infinitely more glorious and desirable than all those proud and pompous surnames with which his infamous predecessors had been so undeservedly honoured, who ought to have been called tyrants, rather than fathers of their country.

Among the rest of his good qualities, Titus carried generosity as far as it could go. It was his greatest pleasure to grant favours, to make presents, and to do good offices, and he was often heard to say that nobody ought to quit the presence of a great prince but with a contented heart. His hand was ever ready to bestow, and he had so great and noble a soul, that one night, recollecting that nobody had asked anything of him the preceding day, he lamented it as if it were a great misfortune, and said, as he was sitting down to table, "Alas! my dear friends, I have lost a day!" Sentiments truly

worthy of a great Emperor, and so well expressed in those few words that they have been taken notice of and transmitted to posterity by all the historians! He displayed his magnificence in the great and costly repairs that he caused to be carried out in Rome, and especially in the construction of that stupendous amphitheatre begun by his father, which he finished and brought to the utmost perfection, a work, the remains of which are still the wonder and admiration of all the world.¹

If such a prince as this had lived to a great age, it would have been an inestimable blessing to the world, but unfortunately his life was short. He died in the third year of his reign, and people had good reason to believe that his brother, Domitian, who succeeded him in the Empire, was the contriver of his death.

¹When this amphitheatre was entire, it was by far the noblest building in Rome. Martial speaks of it with great admiration in one of his epigrams.

Omnis Cæsareo cedat labor amphitheatro.
Unum præ cunctis fama loquatur opus.

In the middle of this amphitheatre was erected the great statue of Nero, called the colossus, on which account that place was known by the name of the Colosseum. Here it was that the Romans indulged themselves in the cruel pleasure of seeing men fight against wild beasts; and in this place Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was exposed to the lions. This amphitheatre is now half in ruins but the noble remains of it give us the highest idea of its Roman grandeur. There is a devout inscription on that side of it next to Constantine's triumphal arch, and another on the opposite side.

DOMITIA

WIFE OF DOMITIAN



BEAUTY and virtue do not always go together; on the contrary, it is an old observation that they seldom meet, for natural temperament generally triumphs over prudence and modesty, which too often prove but weak barriers against violent and depraved appetites. We have seen what an ill use Julia, Poppæa, and others of like character made of their charms, and we have now to relate in what manner Domitia employed hers.

She was daughter of Domitius Corbulo, one of the greatest men that ever Rome produced. His virtues, both civil and military, put him upon a level with the most famous generals and ablest politicians of ancient Rome. Honest and incorruptible, he had nothing at heart but the glory of acquitting himself well in all his actions. Prudent as he was in his undertakings, intrepid in dangers, and impenetrable in his designs, he was almost sure of success in all his projects, nor could that success be ever attributed to chance. Of the greatest presence of mind, so that he was ever furnished with almost infallible resources, even against accidents that could least of all be foreseen, by his consummate experience in the art of war

he had the secret of making every event turn to his advantage. It was a common saying of his,¹ that a general should know how to beat the enemy with every kind of weapon and by indefatigable labour.

Besides all this, he was endued with so inviolable a fidelity, even in regard to his enemies and those of the Empire, that the very barbarians loved and esteemed him, though he was their greatest terror. In short, his uprightness,² vast abilities, numerous victories, and the triumphs with which he was honoured, rendered him so universally admired that everybody judged him worthy of the throne.

Domitia Longina, being thus of importance through her father, was yet more so by her beauty, for which no lady in Rome could be compared to her. She was then in the bloom of her youth, and possessed that irresistible charm that seldom fails to gain admirers. All the young men of quality and distinction eagerly sought her alliance, and Aelius Lamia, of the ancient and illustrious family of the Lamians, was proud of the honour of marrying her.

This senator (who by a fabulous sort of genealogy was made to descend from the gods themselves through Lamus, son of Neptune) possessed all the good qualities that it was possible for a man to have, and would have captivated any other heart but that of Domitia, but this lady was too much a coquette to confine her inclinations within the narrow limits of conjugal fidelity, for, by the loss of her father, whom Nero (that enemy to all virtue) sacrificed to his brutal fury, she was deprived of all those good examples and lessons which he had been very

¹ Domitius Corbulo dolabra, id est, operibus hostem vincendum esse dicebat. Frontin. Stratagem. lib. 4. c. 7.

² Tacit. An. 15. c. 27.

assiduous in giving her, and her ambition, added to her natural inclination to amours, turned the daughter of the wisest and greatest of men into the most abandoned and debauched courtesan in Rome.

Domitian, second son of the Emperor Vespasian, was the first who, by his particular attachment to her, gave room for suspicions that were not at all favourable to her reputation. People could not but have a very indifferent opinion of her virtue, since she received that prince's addresses with so much complaisance, and in such a manner as must needs be taken notice of by all the world, so that nobody imagined her capable of offering any great resistance to the ardent advances of Domitian, who was the only person that could advance her fortunes. Lamia, being more interested than others, did not fail to make these reflections; he could not help being much alarmed, nor were those alarms without foundation, for scarce was Domitian¹ upon the throne than, making use of the sovereign power he was thus invested with, he brutally forced Domitia from her husband and married her soon after,² honouring her with the title of August, without troubling himself with any of those formalities that Augustus thought himself bound to observe when he married Livia, for he did not do so till he had consulted the gods and their pontiffs, and made profuse apologies to Tiberius Nero, her husband.

As violent and sudden passions are seldom lasting, people were of opinion that Domitian's would easily be extinguished by the liberty he had of gratifying it, and that he would soon be weary of a woman over whose virtue he had made so cheap a conquest. Besides, there

¹ Dio. lib. 67.

² Suet. vit. Domit.

were powerful reasons of State, that seemed to plead hard for his putting away Domitia. The Emperor Titus,¹ his brother, had a mind to marry him to his daughter, Julia, a princess of admirable beauty, nothing inferior to that of Domitia, and their temperaments were pretty much alike in point of gallantry. But love is seldom directed by maxims of policy, and Domitian was too fascinated to prefer his fortune to his passion, especially as he had ² already a daughter by Domitia. He was therefore deaf to all that could be said upon that point, and steadfastly refused the alliance that his brother offered him; so that it was with great indifference that he saw Titus give his daughter, Julia, to Sabinus, his cousin-german, though the Empire was her portion.

It was impossible for Domitian to give his mistress a greater mark of his esteem than his rejecting, for her sake, one of the most amiable ladies in Rome, and the highest fortune in the world. So great a sacrifice seemed to promise her no less than an unchangeable affection, but nothing is so uncertain as the caprices of love, for it often happens that it is near its end, when it appears most firm and durable.³ Julia was no sooner married to Sabinus than Domitian became desperately in love with her; he was quite indifferent, when he might innocently have indulged an affection for her, and violently smitten, when he could not love her without crime, for such is the miserable depravity of human nature, that it hardly ever happens that men ardently desire anything except what is unlawful.

That which most contributed to inflame Domitian was

¹ Suet. vit. Domit. 22.

² Suet. vit. Domit. 3.

³ Sueton. vit. Domit. 22.

that Julia, notwithstanding the contempt he had shown for her, was far from resenting it; on the contrary, she took care to let him see that she could forgive him, without doing any great violence to her feelings. She had the reputation of not being over cruel, and accordingly thought Domitian made her sufficient amends for the slight he had put upon her by his repentance, which she was determined to believe real and sincere, and therefore gave herself up to him without reserve. They shamefully abused the liberty of seeing each other as often as they pleased, which nearness of kindred furnished them with, and Julia made no scruple of prostituting herself to him who a little before had despised her, and her behaviour in this respect plainly showed that disorderly appetites and delicacy are incompatible.

Matters went on more scandalously after Titus's death, for there was an end of all constraint and decency when that Emperor was no more,¹ and our two lovers, having nothing now to fear, gave full scope to their infamous passion. There was one thing that seemed to interrupt their brutal felicity. Sabinus was the husband of Julia, and Domitian was become ridiculously jealous of him, as if he himself had the sole right to a possession, which Julia could not give him without being guilty in the highest degree; he therefore determined as soon as possible to get rid of this troublesome obstacle.

Domitia, meanwhile, soon perceived a great change in the Emperor, but far from complaining she, on the contrary, saw this alteration with great indifference, comforting herself with reflecting that at most he was only taking revenge for her numerous infidelities with regard to him;

¹ Suet. vit. Domit. 22.

and, as if she had resolved to copy him exactly, and regulate her conduct according to his, she abandoned herself publicly to libertinism, as soon as she found that he did so without reserve. She carried her impudence and prostitutions as far as they could go, and with an almost unparalleled insolence and audaciousness, gave herself ¹ up entirely to the vilest and most contemptible of mankind. Paris, the comedian, with whom she was become furiously in love, was the person she was fondest of, and whom she encouraged without the least regard to shame or decency.

Nor did Domitian, for his part, give himself much trouble about his wife's conduct, for, being taken up with the intrigue with his niece, he was ² satisfied with divorcing her, conformable to the advice which the senator Ursus gave him; as for Paris, he had him assassinated in the open street. This was all the revenge he took upon Domitia, but he would have done better if he had taken the advice that some people gave him, and had put an end to her evil ways and her life at the same time, by prudently and justly employing against her the punishment he inflicted upon the innocent Sabinus, whom he put to death upon ridiculous pretences, in order to enjoy his wife without a rival. But he had soon reason to repent of his proceedings in both these cases. Domitia lived to dishonour him more and more by her infamous behaviour, and the death of Sabinus (who had stood so much in his way), which he imagined would procure him the free possession of Julia, only served to occasion her destruction; for no sooner had Domitian cut off Sabinus, whom

¹ Sueton. vit. Domit. 3. Aurel. Victor. in Domit.

² Sueton. vit. Domit. 3. Xiphilin. in Domit.

he looked upon as the fatal obstacle to his happiness, than he abandoned himself entirely to his ungovernable passion for Julia, who, on her side, was not ashamed to behave with her uncle just as she might have done with her husband; in short, they lived together in such intimacy that Julia became with child.

Then it was that they were sensible of their folly in having inconsiderately put to death a man who would have been so necessary to their abominable commerce. They were ashamed that all the town should see the scandalous fruit of their incest, and that the whole Empire should know that an uncle had carried on such a shameful amour with his niece. So true it is, that even those who possess sovereign power, and consequently are above being called to account, are still desirous to conceal their vices. Domitian then, resolving to take such measures as should hide from the world the crime he had been guilty of with Julia, and which otherwise must soon be discovered, had recourse to another piece of iniquity, for¹ he persuaded her to swallow a potion that was to cause a miscarriage, and history informs us that it was not the first time she had had recourse to that wicked expedient. But it happened that this murderous draught operated so much more powerfully than they expected, that it occasioned the death of Julia.²

The death of Julia reinstated Domitia in the Emperor's good graces. His love for her having been rather lulled to sleep than extinguished, he recalled her, under pretence that the people entreated that favour of him, and ridiculously declared,³ that she should again be ad-

¹ Dio. Lib. 67.

² Sueton. vit. Domit. 13.

³ Sueton. vit. Domit. 22. Dio. 16. Plin. Epist. 11.

mitted to his sacred bed. He did not reflect that the same reasons for which he put her away existed still, and were even stronger than ever. This inconsistency and want of thought exposed him to satire and criticism. People said he had committed a great fault, either in parting with her without sufficient provocation, or in recalling her without amendment, so that his behaviour became the common topic of conversation, but the liberty people took proved fatal to many of them. Subjects may lament the faults of their prince in silence, which never makes them culpable, but kings are not to be jested with.¹ Helvidius was put to death for having composed some verses, in which, in the characters of Paris and Oenone, he made reflections upon the Emperor's having divorced Domitia. Lamia also lost his life for expressing himself somewhat too freely upon that subject, though he had certainly a better right to do so than anybody, as his wife had been forced from him by violence. In short, everyone that had dared to blame the conduct of that tyrant experienced his cruelty, for these railleries were the more insupportable in that he was conscious of their being true. He could not but call to mind ² the infamous debaucheries of Domitia with all sorts of vile, low, and contemptible wretches, as well as the horrid excesses she had been guilty of with Paris, the comedian, whose public punishment sufficiently proved his crime, and as these tormenting reflections augmented his anger, in proportion as they increased his shame, he breathed nothing but rage and fury. One of Paris's pupils ³ was immediately executed, because there happened to be some resemblance

¹ Sueton. vit. Domit.

² Aurel. Victor. in. Domit.

³ Sueton. vit. Domit.

between his master and him. Hermogenes, a native of Tarsus, underwent the same fate for having made use of some offensive expressions in a history he had written. At last, not knowing whom to exercise his resentment upon, he made everybody feel the effects of his vengeance without respecting virtue, relationship, age, or innocence. Glabrio, who had been consul, and who they say, was inclined to the Christian religion, and Flavius Clemens,¹ his own cousin-german, were of the number of those who were executed by this tyrant. Domitilla, wife to the latter, was banished to the Island of Pandataria, and Flavia, another of his own near relations, to the Isle of Pontia, where she received the palm of martyrdom.

It might have been expected that Domitia would have taken warning by the punishment inflicted upon Paris, the comedian, and all the other bloody executions we have mentioned; but, so far from altering her behaviour, she rather grew worse, for her having hitherto escaped the punishment she deserved encouraged her to go on in the same way; she imagined that, as she had carried her abominations to the highest pitch, without their having been attended with any very bad consequences, she had nothing further to apprehend; so, not content with giving herself up entirely to all kinds of debauchery, she even boasted of it, and publicly committed those crimes which any other would, at least, have endeavoured to conceal.

It is amazing that this Empress, such as she has been described, should have met with people who have highly extolled and commended her; Josephus, however, that celebrated historian, and in other respects so honest a man, has not been ashamed to do this: he has represented

¹ Sueton. vit. Domit. 15.

her as a most virtuous princess, and has lavished upon her a profusion of mercenary and self-interested praises, in return for the many substantial favours she honoured him with, and for having taken him under her immediate protection.

Procopius has also followed the example of the above-mentioned Jew, and painted her in the most beautiful colours, as a princess endued with virtue and every good quality. By this extraordinary and undeserved commendation, we may see that there are none so bad as not to be approved of by some people, if they have but power and authority.

But Domitian, who knew his wife better than anybody, could not prevail upon himself to think so well of her. He was thoroughly informed of all her conduct, and was well assured that there was nothing she was not capable of after the life she had led; he therefore determined to punish her, once for all, according to her deserts, and put her to death. The day intended for this execution was to have been fatal to a great many others as well as her; for the Emperor, having taken a dislike to a number of his courtiers, had resolved to put an end to his jealousies at the expense of their lives, and with this view he had drawn up a list of such persons as were to be sacrificed to his fury, and Domitia, his wife, was the first upon the roll. Petronius, Parthenius, grand chamberlain, Norbanus, and several others were also of the number of those who were destined to destruction, and certainly they would have had but a few hours to live, if they had not been saved by a kind of miracle.

The Emperor kept about him a young child, whose prattle he was very fond of, who entering one day into

Domitian's chamber, when he was asleep, found a paper at the bed's head, under the bolster, and carried it away with him for a plaything. Domitia, meeting with the child, began to divert herself with him. While caressing the boy she soon spied the paper, which she took from him and read. But what was her surprise when she saw her own name among those who had but a day to live. Being in possession of this important list, she lost no time in assembling all those who were equally concerned in it with herself, and in order to prevent the misfortune which threatened them, she informed them of the danger they were in, and proved it by producing the document.

The time was very short, the peril excessive, and consequently it was no season for hesitating what to do; they therefore immediately agreed that there was but one way to prevent the evil, and that was to be beforehand with Domitian, by dealing him the blow which he had prepared for them. This was accordingly done, and Domitian, who was massacred in his bed, left a useful lesson to all bloody tyrants, that a miserable and untimely end is often the just punishment which they bring upon themselves by their violence and cruelty.¹ History informs us of nothing further relating to Domitia, but, from what we have seen of her, we may venture to take it for granted, without doing much wrong to her memory, that she passed the remainder of her life after the same manner, and that, since the constant fear of punishment she

¹It is confidently affirmed, by all the historians, that at the very moment when Domitian was being assassinated at Rome, it was known at Ephesus; for the famous magician, Apollonius of Tyana, who was then haranguing the people of Ephesus, stopped short, and began to cry out: "Strike the tyrant, strike him"; and he declared to all present that at that instant the Emperor was being killed at Rome.

was in during her husband's life was not strong enough to influence her behaviour, she did not alter her conduct for the better, under the reigns of Nerva and Trajan, who were not guilty of cruelty, except to the Christians.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY
THE FIRST EMPRESSES
AND
NERVA



THE Roman Empire was never so flourishing as in the reign of Augustus, who, properly speaking, was the founder of it. This prince, by the good fortune of his arms, his moderation, and the wisdom of his government, knew how to make his authority respected, without rendering it odious, and though people, who have been always accustomed to independence, are apt to be exceedingly averse to the beginnings of slavery, yet the Romans, who had ever been so jealous of their liberty, were brought by degrees to bear this new yoke, because Augustus had the secret of making it easy, by stripping it of all that was disagreeable.

But it must be confessed that he was indebted to the Empress Livia for a great part of his glory. The most prudent and judicious of his actions were reckoned the fruit of her counsels and advice. It is thought that the magnanimity which he exhibited in pardoning Cinna and his accomplices for their conspiracy, contributed more to his grandeur and happiness than the most important of his victories, and everybody knows that it was a conver-

sation he had with Livia that determined him to pardon those great men. Nothing fixed him so securely upon the throne as this well-timed piece of clemency to those who had a mind to deprive him of it, and this politic generosity was the effect of his consultation with the Empress, who had, generally speaking, a better way of judging than himself.

The other ladies (wives to those Emperors who succeeded Augustus, and were commonly called the twelve Cæsars) had neither the abilities, greatness of soul, prudence, nor policy of Livia. They were, on the contrary, remarkable for nothing that was to their advantage, but rather brought more dishonour upon the Empire than the worst of their husbands, who in reality were only instruments which the Empresses made use of to carry out their designs and gratify their passions. Cæsonia, who disordered the brain of her husband, Caligula, by the love-potion she gave him, made herself accountable for all his bad actions. Messalina and Agrippina, by their cruelty, ambition, covetousness, and debauchery, were the severest scourges that ever Rome and the provinces groaned under. And Julia, Poppæa, and Domitia made themselves scandalous throughout the whole Empire by their infamous lives. Such were the first Empresses.

Plotina, indeed, went a great way towards reinstating the Empire in its original splendour. She had Livia's good qualities, without her pride and haughtiness, but, of those Empresses that succeeded her, few had her virtues; and many of them trod in the steps of Messalina and Julia, as we shall see in the history of their lives.

Domitia and the rest of those who conspired against Domitian, offered the throne to several persons, who

were afraid to accept it, because they looked upon those offers as so many snares that were laid for them; but Nerva, at last, being dazzled with the lustre of the sovereign authority, was prevailed on to comply with their request.

He was grandson of Cocceius Nerva, the famous lawyer, whom Augustus so much honoured with his esteem. He was a moderate and prudent man, of a peaceable disposition, a great lover of books, and of learned men. Martial has given us a fine picture of Nerva, and represents him to be a person endued with every good quality. Domitian was afraid of him, because certain soothsayers had predicted that he should be one day Emperor. This so alarmed the tyrant, that he was several times within a little of putting him to death, but an astrologer, who loved Nerva, and whose skill in foretelling events Domitian had a great opinion of, assured the Emperor that Nerva would not live many days, and saved his life by this stratagem.

As soon as the news of Domitian's death was spread abroad, Nerva was declared Emperor. The Prætorian cohorts paid him their homage immediately, but at the very time when the new Emperor was very agreeably employed in this ceremony, there came a report that Domitian was not dead. Nerva was struck with such terror that he was not able to speak a word, but Parthenius encouraged him by protesting solemnly that he knew the former report to be true, and that he had nothing to fear from that quarter.

The senate heard with great joy that Nerva was chosen, and confirmed the election, knowing the great merits of this prince, and having all the reason in the

world to hope for better times, and they soon found that they were not mistaken in their judgment. The new Emperor immediately recalled all those whom his predecessor had banished, and restored to them their estates, which the cruelty of Domitian had deprived them of, issued severe laws against informers, and punished with death the slaves and freedmen who had accused their masters. He expressly commanded that no statues of gold or silver should be erected in his honour, and sold his plate, furniture, and a great part of his land to supply the necessities of the State. Upon every occasion he gave evident tokens of his beneficence and goodness, and made proper regulations to reform the abuses that had crept in by the negligence of former Emperors; but, being timid, and not having resolution enough to alter certain customs which yet ought by all means to have been abolished, and knowing that he was despised on account of his old age, he looked out for a person of vigour and intellect whom he might associate with himself in the government, and selected Trajan to be his partner in the Empire.

It is not certain that Nerva had no wife, but it would be very difficult to prove that he had, for the reasons that some modern authors allege to show that, when Trajan was adopted, Nerva's wife was alive, do not seem to me to be convincing. Neither is it very probable that he had children, for it is not to be supposed that he would have gone out of his own family for heirs to the throne. Be that as it may, he could not possibly have made a more worthy choice, or thought of a man more capable of raising the Empire to its former glory than Trajan, who at that time was at the head of a powerful army in Germany. He gave him the title of Cæsar, with the sur-

name of Germanicus, and soon after honoured him with that of Emperor, making him his colleague in the sovereign authority, of which in a little time he left him entirely in possession by his death.

PLOTINA

WIFE OF TRAJAN



LPIUS TRAJANUS was a Spaniard, born in the town of Italica, of an ancient family, but not very illustrious. His father, indeed, distinguished himself in Vespasian's wars against the Jews, where his exploits made him known to the Emperor, and procured him his esteem, together with the consulship, and the honour of a triumph.

Trajan, at the time of his adoption, was in the prime of life, between the giddiness of youth and the slowness of old age; agreeable enough ¹ in his person, of a large frame, but well proportioned, his neck muscular and head large, which were reckoned indications of prudence and fortitude, as well as of strength of body. His countenance ² was always serene, without the least signs of melancholy, anger, or any other passion, that might have altered the sweetness and majesty that shone in every feature of his face. His grey hair seemed to command respect, but what most of all ingratiated him with the people were the excellent qualities, civil, military, and political, which were happily united in his person. He was so skilful in the art of war, which he had been bred up to from his youth, that it was a matter of doubt which

¹ Dio. lib. 68.

² Spon. recherches curieuses d'antiquité.

deserved to be most esteemed in him, the general who gave his orders with so much judgment and discretion, or the soldier who obeyed with so much fidelity and valour. Sober, watchful, indefatigable, he taught his troops, by his own example, how to endure hunger, thirst, and all sorts of hardships, and forced them, whether they would or not, to love him, by cheerfully undergoing the same inconveniences with the meanest of them. He was so little given to pride and ostentation that he used to converse familiarly with the soldiers, and yet had the secret of maintaining his authority in such a manner that they never failed in point of respect, for though he condescended to a familiarity with them upon certain occasions, he took care not to make himself so cheap as to be contemptible. Incapable of disguise and artifice, he always spoke plain truth, mortally hating all those subtle and ambiguous expressions that make a man so impenetrable that one cannot approach him without shyness and mistrust. His whole endeavours were how to make himself loved, not feared.¹ He visited his friends without ceremony, without guards or attendance, and invited himself familiarly to their houses, where, laying entirely aside all state and grandeur, he put himself upon an equality with the rest of the company. Men of learning were frequently the objects of his generosity and magnificence, for though he had not applied much of his time to study, yet he knew how to distinguish true merit, which he greatly esteemed, and never suffered to go unrewarded. It would be very difficult to find a prince so strict an observer of justice, for, if he ever seemed to deviate from it in some measure, it was upon occasions

¹ Xiphilin. in Trajan. Aurel. Victor.

where he had to decide against his own interests. He kept in awe, especially in the beginning of his reign, the intendants and collectors of the taxes, who were accustomed to perform their office in so vexatious and oppressive a way, that the manner of doing it was more grievous than the taxes themselves. He did not fill his coffers with the blood and sweat of the people, but, on the contrary, demanded of the provinces no more than his needs absolutely required, for which reason he had always the satisfaction of finding that they gave with pleasure and cheerfulness. He treated the people kindly and affectionately, as if they had been his children, and the Senate with respect. As for slanderers and flatterers, those pests of mankind, he banished them from his Court. He gave his favourites but a very limited power, and even took care to choose none but persons of probity and honour, who could not but be acceptable to the people, when approved of by such a prince.

It would be endless to enter into details of all Trajan's good qualities; but, on the other hand, I should be guilty of a fault not to be pardoned in an historian were I to conceal his faults and vices. He was so much given to wine that he often passed whole nights in that kind of debauchery, and Hadrian, his successor, used to acknowledge that he owed his being adopted by the Emperor to his complaisance in bearing him company upon those occasions. He was never accused of having transgressed in point of chastity with women, but with too much justice a more shameful and brutal vice was imputed to him. He was by no means exempt from vanity, but gave evident tokens of it, even upon some occasions that were quite beneath a great prince, who was acknowledged to

have excellent sense, for he not only permitted¹ the people to call him Lord (which Augustus would never allow), but suffered them to offer sacrifices at his statues, which was an impiety Tiberius absolutely forbade. He also caused magnificent triumphal arches to be erected in his honour, and his name to be engraven upon all the buildings he either made or repaired.²

Such was Trajan, who was chosen by Nerva to succeed him, in order to raise the Empire to its original glory and splendour. He fully answered to what was expected from him, but it must also be owned that the felicity of his reign was in a great measure attributable to Plotina, his wife. History is silent as to her family and her country.

It is thought,³ however, that she was either sister or a near relation to Pompeius Planta, Governor of Egypt, who was much esteemed by Trajan; but it is certain that most of the historians who mention Plotina speak of her with great commendation. Trajan married her long before he was adopted by Nerva. She was not handsome; there was even something in her countenance so grave and serious as made her appear disagreeable, but her manners were extremely pleasing, for her exaltation made no change in her conduct, nor could anybody ever reproach her with pride or haughtiness. She was so far from coveting those pompous titles which the preceding Empresses assumed so undeservedly, and with so much ostentation, that she refused those which the Senate entreated her to accept, and nothing made her humility and modesty appear to greater advantage than the comparison people made between her behaviour and the insolent

¹ Dio. lib. 55.

² Aurel. Vict. in Constanti.

³ Tristan. Comment. Historiq.

vanity of other Empresses, who took upon them the proud title of "mothers of their country," whereas, in reality, they were its most cruel scourges, dishonouring by their crimes that throne to which Plotina was an ornament. There never was a more judicious princess, for her advice was always such as tended to the good of the public and the honour of Trajan, as Julian, the Emperor, acknowledged, who was a better judge of merit than of the true religion. In short, Plotina contributed exceedingly to the glory of Trajan, and the splendour of his reign.

Nobody could charge her with any of those flagrant crimes and abominations of the Empresses who preceded her, for she always seemed innocent and blameless, never apparently deviating from the strictest rules of decency and good manners.

It cannot, however, be taken for granted that in reality she was deserving of the eulogies lavished upon her by Pliny,¹ who calls her a woman exempt from all suspicion, and beyond the reach of censure; but a panegyric is not always a proof that the person praised is worthy of it, especially when it happens that he who commends lies under great obligations to the other. Some there are who deny this rigid virtue that Pliny ascribes to Plotina, and to say the truth, when one comes to examine closely the great regard that this Empress had for Hadrian, it looks as if there was at least as much policy in her virtue as in Pliny's commendation. The true motives of Plotina's extraordinary zeal for Hadrian's interests upon all occasions may easily be perceived by the help of a little reflection, and without much difficulty, or straining the

¹ Plin. Epist. lib. 9.

point, it will be found that the friendly protectress was neither more nor less than a kind of mistress. A great many credible authors are of this opinion, and have observed that Plotina made good use of her dissimulation to promote other views, and the better to gratify her passions, especially her amour with Hadrian. It is true that this Empress knew so well how to take her measures, and put on a fair outside, that her failings were, for the most part, extremely well concealed, but all her care, attention, and prudery could not protect her against public report, for people did conclude, in spite of all her efforts to disguise it, that Hadrian was by no means indifferent to her.

Plotina was with Trajan at Cologne, when he received the news of his adoption in a letter Nerva himself wrote him. This adoption, which did credit to Nerva's judgment, was also an extraordinary honour to Trajan, because it was entirely owing to his merit, Nerva having preferred him ¹ to all his own relations and friends, and associated him in the Empire, though a stranger and at a distance from Rome. This choice was approved of by all the orders of the city, the legions, and the provinces, and, indeed, it may be said that the whole Empire, being well acquainted with Trajan's merit, consented cheerfully to the election.

The new Emperor could not immediately leave Germany, where his presence was necessary, but was obliged to remain there till he had put matters upon a sound footing, which he was able to do in less than three months; he then set out, with Plotina, his wife, to take possession of his dignity at Rome, where he was much

¹Dio. lib. 68.

wanted. They were received with the greatest demonstrations of joy, amidst the general acclamations of the people, who showed all possible tokens of their affection both for him and Plotina, and the latter appeared so much the more worthy of it, as her humility upon this occasion was more admired than her fortune. When they returned from the Capitol whither they went immediately upon their arrival at Rome, and were ascending the stairs of the palace, followed by a vast multitude of people, who were paying their respects to them, the Empress turned towards them, and being desirous to show that the pomp and splendour of the throne had made no alteration in her, she,¹ with the greatest affability, protested that, if it should be her fortune to quit it, she would do so with the same pleasure and satisfaction she then felt. These were such sentiments of moderation as had not been found in persons of her rank, and extremely ingratiated her with everybody.

The many good qualities of Trajan gave room to hope that this reign would be mild and equitable, neither were people deceived in him, for he fully answered their expectations. He set himself in the first place to make proper regulations for the good of the city, and to reform abuses. He restored to masters ² the right they formerly had over their freedmen, which Domitian had deprived them of. There are some historians who attribute the idea to Nerva, and will have it that Trajan only carried it out, but Martial gives all the honour of it to Trajan.³ He also deprived these freedmen of the audacious liberty they enjoyed of accusing their masters, that fatal permission,

¹ Dio. lib. 68. Xiphilin. in Trajan.

² Dio lib. 68. Xiphilin. Aurel. Vict. Eutrop.

³ Mart. Ep. 34.

that had been attended with such tragical consequences! After having sufficiently provided for the security of the public, he entertained them with sports, feasts, and agreeable shows. The people had not, for a long time past, enjoyed those amusements with so much satisfaction, because they were now perfectly safe during their diversions, which was not the case in the preceding reigns. The cruelty of the former Emperors made the spectators quite incapable of any pleasure in these games and pastimes, being in continual dread and apprehension lest some mischief should befall them, for those who were obliged to be present at them, for fear of disobliging the Emperors, were all the while in constant expectation of death, since it frequently happened that a horrible massacre succeeded the shows, whereas, under Trajan, everyone was safe. Nobody had need to fear any other kind of death than a natural one, except they were guilty of some crime to deserve it, for neither the covetousness of the prince, nor jealousies, nor cruelty, nor the Empress's revenge, could give anyone reason to be uneasy. Slanderers were not listened to, except in order to stop their mouth, and punish their malice; riches did not render the possessors of them criminal, for the Emperor made his own happiness consist in that of his subjects. Thus nobly and commendably did Trajan employ his life, in which he was extremely encouraged by the example and advice of Plotina, who, in a great measure, inspired him with these godlike sentiments, and gave him more prudent and salutary counsel than he could have had from the wisest and most learned men.

But Trajan's extraordinary care and attention for the city began to diminish the vigilance that was necessary

for the provinces, where the governors and intendants, depending on the Emperor's goodness and the confidence he placed in them, exercised their rapines and extortions with so much the more boldness, as nobody dared to complain of them, for the Emperor had such an aversion to slanderers that he was apt to run into the other extreme, so that it was difficult for the miserable and oppressed to get access to him; he did not consider, that in being deaf to calumniators, he also stopped his ears against fraud and injustice. It was, however, a happy circumstance for such unfortunate victims as had fallen a sacrifice to the greediness of those bloodsuckers that, though they were not able to lay their grievances before the Emperor, they were sure to meet with a kind reception from Plotina, who was ever ready to give them a gracious hearing. She always took care to keep herself thoroughly informed in these matters, and so became well acquainted with the cruelties and violent proceedings of these tyrants. She perceived that to be rich in any of the provinces was reason sufficient for a man being the object of their persecution, and that there was no way to escape the fury of these leeches but giving up all they had to their insatiable greediness. She could not hear of these evils, without being full of compassion for the poor oppressed countries, and indignation against the offenders, and therefore resolved to let Trajan know how far these dangerous abuses had gone. She then gave him details of all the infamous methods those iniquitous commissioners took to enrich themselves. She represented to him the irreparable injury which these miscreants did to his reputation, since his not punishing injustice was authorising it. In short, she argued with so much strength of reason and

good sense, that Trajan owned himself to blame, and at once remedied these disorders by reprimanding severely the delinquents, and putting the government of the provinces upon such a footing, and under such wise regulations, as secured them for the future against the extortion of those harpies.

It was universally acknowledged that these wise measures were owing to the zeal and prudent advice of Plotina, and the Senate, with great justice, decreed her the glorious title of August, which had been often prostituted to the most infamous Empresses. Marciana, the Emperor's sister, being also endued with the same good qualities, received the same mark of their favour. However, their moderation was such that they both refused that honour, which others had so much coveted and usurped, imagining that Trajan's not accepting the title of Father of the Commonwealth, which he deserved, ought to be to them an example of humility worthy to be imitated; nor would they consent to accept them, till Trajan had been with great difficulty prevailed upon to accept the above-mentioned title, together with that of "the best of men," which clearly demonstrates the high opinion they had of the goodness of his heart and his affection for his people.

The excessive honours conferred upon Trajan were understood by him as laying him under fresh obligations to use his utmost endeavours for the good of the public; and, in reality, he gave himself up entirely to it. The most effectual method he could think of for that purpose was to appoint none to public offices but persons of merit and probity, in which he was so fortunate that it seemed as if he had collected the votes of the public before he

filled up the vacancies, so that his Court was composed of none but such as were remarkable for honour and reputation.

Hadrian, his near relation, held the first rank, which he was entitled to, both on account of his birth and his merits. Licinius Sura, whom the Emperor made use of to signify his pleasure to the Senate and people, was the person he put most confidence in, and trusted with all his secrets. There was also Julius Severianus, a senator of high rank and such merit that Trajan thought him worthy of the Empire; Attianus, who together with the Emperor had been guardian to Hadrian; Pliny, famous for his erudition, his eloquence, and his politeness; Lucius Quietus, a Moorish prince, equal to the greatest generals in his intrepidity and his experiences in the art of war; Palma and Senecio, greatly esteemed by Trajan; Tacitus, so remarkable for his history and wise maxims; Celsus, and many other great men, who by their merit justified the choice of the Emperor, who honoured them with his friendship; Frontinus, illustrious for his military exploits, his knowledge of the laws, and the great capacity with which he had filled the most important posts; Saturninus, whose judgment was decisive in all performances of wit and learning; Martial, whose poetry was so much in fashion in the reign of Domitian, and who continued his epigrams, till, finding himself not so much favoured at Trajan's Court, as he had been at Domitian's, retired to Spain, his native country; Juvenal, so celebrated for his satires, for which he was banished from Rome, and so many others, that it would be tedious to the reader were we to give a list of them.

The ladies were equal ornaments to the court of

Trajan, nor was the Empress Plotina worse attended than he. They consisted chiefly of the Princess Marciana, the Emperor's sister, Matidia, daughter of that princess, also Sabina and Matidia, her daughters again. These were of the first class.

There were also Paulina, sister to Hadrian, Domitia, their mother; the daughter of Severianus, and Calpurnia, Pliny's wife, who was also well received at Court.

As the Emperor had no children by Plotina, the Princesses Sabina and Matidia, his nieces, were the more respected, for they were looked upon as the daughters of Trajan, and consequently all persons of quality and distinction paid their court to them. Marciana was a widow when she arrived at Rome with Trajan on his return from Cologne, and in all probability her daughter Matidia was so likewise, for history does not mention the names of their husbands. These princesses always showed a respectful deference for Plotina, and the Empress, on her part, never omitted any opportunity of giving them marks of her esteem and consideration. Never had there been seen so charming a unity as among these illustrious persons.

Sabina was the eldest of Matidia's daughters, and most beloved by Trajan; she was regarded as heiress to the throne. Hadrian was very assiduous in paying his respects to her, and though his heart was not so much concerned as his ambition, yet he always affected a great passion for her, being persuaded that, if he could be so fortunate as to marry her, it could not but extremely contribute to his advancement. In order to promote this he ran into such expenses as ruined him, without his gaining much ground in his amour; for, though he was hand-

some,¹ had a great deal of wit and learning, and was a man of gallantry, he had not the secret of making any great impression upon Sabina's affections, so that all his efforts and endeavours were in a manner lost upon her. He never would have been husband to this princess if Plotina had not employed all her interest with the Emperor to bring it about, for he was not much in favour of it, as he never sincerely loved Hadrian.

The Empress, however, was resolved to secure the Empire to Hadrian, and was therefore bent upon this marriage. Sabina brought her husband for dowry the hopes of succeeding Trajan, and Plotina thought it of the utmost importance to her that Hadrian should reign after her husband, as she would then be assured of having a share in the government. Thus the Empress, urged by her own interests, as well as her inclinations for Hadrian, left nothing undone that could possibly promote this match, and succeeded in her undertaking, in spite of the dislike the Emperor had for him, and the princess's indifference. For, as she was extremely politic, and might justly be called Ulysses disguised in women's apparel, as had been said of Livia, she induced Sura, the Emperor's most intimate confidant, to propose it to him, and afterwards taking proper opportunities of mentioning it to him herself, she managed it so that the Emperor gave his consent.

This grand alliance did not, however, contribute much to the fortune of Hadrian, for Trajan seemed to forget that Hadrian had the honour of being so nearly related to him, and neglected him entirely, at the same time promoting his favourites, whose interests people

¹ Spon. recherc. cur. d'antiq.

imagined he ought not to have had so much at heart, and who perhaps did not possess the merit of Hadrian. Plotina put the Emperor in mind of this, and the consulship, which Trajan gave him, was the fruit of her solicitation.

Those who were clear-sighted imagined they could easily perceive, in the zealous interest in Hadrian's affairs, which Plotina showed upon all occasions, something that went a good deal further than bare friendship; and his attachment to the Empress, and his extraordinary assiduity to be agreeable to her were looked upon as not so much the effects of esteem or gratitude as of love. Be that as it may, it must be confessed that if there was an amour between them, the Empress managed her conduct with so much circumspection, and knew so well how to contrive all her schemes, that she exposed herself very little to censure, for at most it could amount to no more than a suspicion. She certainly made very good use of her great cunning and address, for, though there was a vast deal of artifice in the excessive tenderness and affection she always showed her husband, yet, as she had the secret of making him believe she was sincere, he had the highest esteem for her, and thought much better of her than she deserved, according to the opinion of a great many people, who would needs have it that, in her private conversation, she did not behave with that strictness and regularity that she pretended to, and with which she imposed upon Trajan.

After the Emperor had given a new appearance to the city, by the good order he established in it, by the magnificent buildings he adorned it with, and by the reformation of many abuses that Domitian had either introduced

or permitted, and which Nerva had not been able to correct, he turned his thoughts towards reinstating the Empire in its former lustre, and humbling its enemies, who were encouraged, by the negligence and misconduct of Domitian, to undertake anything. Decebalus, King of the Dacians, was one of those that had most affronted the Romans. This prince was as good a general as he was a politician,¹ skilful in seizing all advantages and abounding in resources and expedients; after having defeated the Roman legions in two battles, he had made Domitian pay very dearly for a peace, and exacted a tribute which he received regularly every year, a most shameful monument of the victory gained by those barbarians. Trajan, who could not endure to submit to this disgrace, which he looked on as an intolerable scandal to the Roman Empire, resolved to be revenged upon these people in his turn, and to wash out with their blood the shame of the victory they had obtained over the Romans, and the infamous conditions the latter had been forced to submit to in consequence of it. He therefore seized upon the first pretence that offered to declare war against them, and marched from Rome at the head of his legions, taking Hadrian with him.

The Emperor's approach astonished the barbarians, for Decebalus knew very well that it was not the Romans he had conquered, but Domitian,² a cowardly and effeminate prince, wallowing in luxury, an enemy to labour and fatigue, and incapable of any laudable ambition. He was now to learn that he would not find it so easy a task to defeat Trajan, who, he knew, was brave, experienced, and as good a soldier as he was a general. He therefore

¹Dio. lib. 57.

²Dio. lib. 68.

did his utmost to avoid coming to a battle, but Trajan was too fond of glory to be contented with merely threatening his enemy. In fact, notwithstanding their ingenious contrivance of engraving upon a large mushroom, which was presented to the Emperor, near the enemy's camp,¹ some lines in Latin, in which the Dacians and neighbouring nations prayed the Emperor to return and not break the peace, Trajan, far from complying with their request, attacked them immediately. This was one of the bloodiest battles that had ever been fought, and may be said, in one sense, to have been fatal to the conquerors themselves, so many brave men did the Romans lose in this action, without mentioning the prodigious number of wounded, whose misfortune furnished the Emperor with an opportunity of demonstrating his excessive goodness, for, as they wanted linen to dress the wounded men, he tore his shirt in pieces for that purpose, and sacrificed his apparel to the miseries of the poor soldiers.

Trajan exerted all his skill and generalship upon this occasion. He carried on the war so vigorously that he penetrated even to the enemy's capital, through the midst of dangers, took the sister of Decebalus and the castle, whither she had retired, and constrained that king to implore the clemency of the conqueror, who, indeed, granted him a peace, but upon such terms as gave the Romans ample satisfaction for the ignominious one that had been extorted from them before. But what was most to be admired in Trajan was, that after he had prescribed the conditions of the peace, he should be so much master of himself, in the height of his success, as

¹Xiphilin. in Trajan.

to preserve his humility and moderation to that degree that, though he was crowned with laurels, in the midst of victories, and the acclamations of the legions, he insisted that King Decebalus should send ambassadors to the Senate, to request them to confirm the treaty.

If it was a most agreeable sight to the Romans to see the Dacians, who had been so insolent and flushed with their victory, forced to acknowledge the authority of the Senate, and sue for pardon and peace after their misfortune; it was no less glorious for Trajan, when the ambassadors entered the Senate, with their hands joined like slaves, serving as heralds to bring tidings of the Emperor's victories, and in the humblest posture confessing their defeat. But Rome was soon after entertained with a much more agreeable show in the person of Trajan himself, who arrived covered with glory. The Senate decreed him the honour of a triumph and the title of Dacicus, which he had so well deserved. This ceremony was followed by many combats of gladiators, and all those other diversions that were usually provided for the people upon the like occasions.

Trajan had the satisfaction of finding in Rome the same order and regularity that his wisdom had established there, and which the prudence of Plotina had maintained in his absence with such ease and facility as proved her capable of everything that was great and noble. The Empire had not, for a long time, enjoyed the happiness of so mild and happy an administration. The provinces no longer feared the attacks of their enemies, nor the extortions of usurers. Trajan's valour and consummate experience left them nothing to apprehend from the one, and his justice put a stop to the extortions

of the other; every single person enjoyed what he had, peaceably and quietly. The city no longer beheld the blood of her most illustrious citizens running down the streets. People were not alarmed, either by the cruelty, avarice, or ambition of Plotina, for, as she was solicitous about nothing but the public good, her whole thoughts were employed in contriving the welfare and prosperity of every individual person. None had reason to complain of her authority, so that it might well be said that if Trajan was the terror of the barbarians, Plotina was the delight of the Romans. She was not distinguished from the other ladies of the city, either by the magnificence of her apparel, the haughtiness of her carriage, or the number of her servants, but by her generosity, her unbounded inclination to do good, the sweetness of her manners and behaviour, her anxiety for the glory of Rome, the goodness of her heart, and the extraordinary pleasure she took in conferring favours. These amiable qualities could not but procure her the love and affection of all the world.

The strict union and friendship that always subsisted between the Empress and Marciana, her sister-in-law, was also the effect of Plotina's wisdom and prudence and the value she set upon that princess's merit. There was no emulation, envy, or jealousy on either side to create a coolness or diminish their mutual affection, no striving against each other, except as to which should be most courteous, for there was such a conformity of inclinations and sentiments between these two ladies, as made them always of the same opinion, and this agreement was the occasion of the perfect tranquillity and happiness that the city and the Court enjoyed, for they

were not laid under the disagreeable necessity of refusing Marciana the respect that was due to her, for fear of incurring Plotina's displeasure, nor, on the other hand, were they apprehensive that Marciana would grudge the Empress what was due to her rank.

Plotina's behaviour was the same in regard to Matidia and the two princesses, her daughters. She showed so much complaisance for them, and espoused their interests with so much zeal and cordiality, that they were not sensible of any superiority of hers over them, so it must be acknowledged that Plotina's exaltation¹ only served to furnish her with opportunities of showing her humility. Their living together in so much harmony gave Trajan infinite pleasure; he saw, with great satisfaction, this good understanding among the ladies of his Court so nearly allied to him, his wife, whose worth and merit he so much admired, his sister and nieces, who were also as dear to him as possible. Thus, having no domestic affairs that gave him any uneasiness, he was the more at leisure to attend to the good of the public. He frequently denied himself his innocent recreations, rather than that justice should not be administered, and used often to stop² in Livia's Porch, in the market place or Forum of Augustus, and other places, to listen, with great patience and attention, to the people's complaints, and caused everybody to be paid their due with such justice and equity, as was no less commendable than it was rarely met with.

In the meantime, whilst Trajan, depending on the treaty of peace which he had concluded with the barbarians, was taken up with regulating and embellishing

¹ Plin. lib. x6.

² Dio. lib. 68.

the city, Decebalus was secretly stirring up the adjacent princes to a revolt. In order to persuade them to it, he endeavoured to convince them that his interest was theirs; that they ought to look upon the Romans as their common enemy; that they might be assured that, when once Dacia was conquered, their countries would also fall a prey to the ambition of the victors; that if they had any regard for their liberty, they should prevent this misfortune by joining their forces against the Emperor.

This cunning and deceitful prince, at the same time that he was corrupting his neighbours, took care to fortify his towns, to store up arms, provisions, and ammunition, to raise troops, to encourage and receive all deserters from the Roman army, and by all these preparations threatened a speedy irruption into the Empire. These operations plainly showed his design, and Trajan was soon informed of it. He communicated this to the Senate, and after they had declared Decebalus an enemy to the Empire, and resolved to punish him for his perfidiousness, the Emperor marched to give him battle.

It was during this expedition that Trajan caused to be made over the Danube the famous bridge that was reckoned one of the most surprising pieces of work that was ever undertaken, being apprehensive that the river might be frozen, and his army, by that means, deprived of all succour. He then penetrated into the enemy's country, and reduced Decebalus to such a miserable condition that the barbarian, perceiving he could not avoid being taken, and fearing that he would be forced to grace the Roman triumph, killed himself in despair. The Emperor had his head cut off, and sent it to Rome. He conquered

all the country of Dacia, and made it a province, planting a colony in it, and giving his own name to several of its towns. He distributed among his troops the riches that King Decebalus imagined he had safely hidden, as he had deposited them in ditches which he had dug in the channel of a river, and turned the watercourse another way for that purpose. Thus Trajan put an end to a war that for a long time past had given the Romans prodigious trouble and uneasiness. Trajan performed wonders in this expedition, and his example encouraged the soldiers to such a degree that a Roman knight, who was wounded, being told that there were no hopes of his recovery, instead of being dejected or losing courage, resolved to signalise the last moments of his life by an action that gloriously evinced his resolution and intrepidity; returning to the battle,¹ he fought with more fury than ever, as he had nothing to be solicitous about, and killed a great many of the enemy, till at last he dropped down dead with loss of blood.

The Emperor having put everything upon a satisfactory footing in Dacia, returned to Rome, where he was received with the greatest and sincerest demonstrations of joy. A triumph was immediately decreed him, magnificent trophies were erected in his honour, and there is still to be seen a most superb monument of his glory, called Trajan's Column, erected in the square which is also called Trajan's Square, and which the Emperor Constantius most admired of all the curiosities in Rome. It is, to this day, reckoned the noblest piece of antiquity in the world, and the greatest example of the ancient Roman magnificence. On it there are represented all

¹ Dio. lib. 68.

the victories, battles, and exploits of Trajan. It was begun on his return from the Dacian War, and was not finished till seven years after. Plotina caused to be put on the top of it the urn which contained his ashes, in place of which Pope Sixtus V. set up the statue of St. Peter.

The conquest of Dacia carried the reputation of Trajan to the most distant nations, and rendered his name an object of respect even to those barbarians whose names were scarce known or heard of, and whose ambassadors came in crowds to pay their respects, or rather adoration, to the Emperor. The Indians came from the furthest corners of the earth to implore his protection, and these strangers, who were admirers of his virtue, were also witnesses of his magnificence, which he displayed in those famous combats of gladiators and wild beasts, games, sports, races, and all manner of shows, which lasted many months.

But these diversions did not so occupy Trajan as to make him give himself up to an effeminate idleness. He showed himself as great in time of peace as in war, by taking indefatigable pains to lighten the afflictions the city laboured under, and by giving the most generous and convincing proofs of his affection for the citizens, who, at that time, were severely chastised by the hand of Providence, for they suffered extremely from the plague, fire, famine, earthquakes, and an extraordinary inundation of the Tiber. He embellished the city with a number of buildings, especially the famous Circus, whose structure and magnificence proclaimed aloud the Emperor's greatness of mind. Besides this, he took care to have the laws strictly observed. Three of the vestal

virgins who had broken their religious vows experienced his justice in a terrible manner, for, how rigorous soever the penalties were in consequence of their crimes (especially a breach of chastity), *Annalia*, *Martia*, and *Licia* did not fear to incur them. They carried on intrigues with three Roman knights, who were as rash and as little scrupulous as themselves. *Lucius Veturius* was the first beginner of this dangerous intimacy, and he conducted it with so much circumspection that nobody knew of it. The vestals, under shelter of their respected dress and the sanctity of their profession, were contriving secret pleasures, and sacrilegiously trampling under foot those solemn vows of which, in public, they pretended to be the zealous observers. Their vigilance to preserve unextinguished the sacred fire of the goddess *Vesta* served for a blind to conceal their own criminal flame. The gallants, on their side, were equally concerned to keep the secret, and consequently took care not to take any steps that could lead to discovery, for the same punishment being reserved for their crime, it was incumbent upon them to use the same precautions. It may well be imagined that this intrigue cost the lovers a great deal of anxiety and solicitude, for it was no easy matter to deceive the public and the Great Vestal, who kept a strict watch upon the behaviour of the rest. They would, notwithstanding, have been too cunning for both, had it not been for an unlucky accident that revealed the mystery. *Veturius* had, among his domestics, a servant who was his confidant in this affair, for people who are engaged in business of that kind must needs trust somebody. This man, having some slight reason to be displeased with his master, thought he could not be more

effectually revenged than by accusing him and his companions of this sacrilegious intercourse with the three vestals. Such offences as these were never pardoned in Rome. Trajan immediately took cognisance of it, and there was no want of proofs against the unfortunate criminals, upon which they were condemned to suffer the punishment which the law inflicted in the like cases.

This severity, though very rigorous, was not to be compared to the cruelty which this otherwise good Emperor exercised towards the innocent Christians, against whom he issued very bloody decrees, which were put in execution with great barbarity. Pliny, who was then governor of Bithynia, wrote to the Emperor, that, after having made the most diligent enquiry he could, he did not find that the Christians were guilty of any fault; that their principles were wise and prudent, and their actions free from everything that was bad. Upon this remonstrance Trajan, knowing Pliny to be a person of the greatest candour and veracity, made another decree, whereby it was forbidden to persecute them merely upon account of their religion, but at the same time ordered, that if they were informed against and convicted, they should be punished. In this the Emperor, who was so great a lover of justice, contradicted himself, for in forbidding that they should not be molested only for being Christians, he declared them innocent, but in commanding that they should be chastised when convicted, he judged them guilty.

About this time died Licinius Sura, the most sincere friend that Trajan had, and to whom he was in a great measure indebted for the Empire. He was extremely afflicted at this loss, and honoured him with a most sump-

tuous funeral, and a magnificent statue, which he caused to be erected to the memory of this valuable favourite, a noble monument of his sorrow and gratitude. It cannot be denied that in Sura the Emperor had a faithful, honest, and zealous friend, whom he knew to be worthy of his esteem and the trust he reposed in him, in spite of the endeavours of certain malicious persons, who, being jealous of the favour he enjoyed, did all that was in their power to make him suspected, by insinuating that he had a design upon the Emperor's life. Trajan, who was incapable of entertaining so outrageous an opinion of the best subject he had, showed by his behaviour that he did not suppose him guilty of so black a crime, and, by so doing, quite discouraged those calumniators;¹ he did not, however, punish them, because they sheltered themselves under a specious show of zeal for his welfare and interests. Having one day invited himself to his favourite's house, he sent away his guards and officers, and remained with him alone; afterwards he asked for Sura's physician (whom he consulted) and his barber, whom he ordered to shave him and clip his eyebrows; he then went into the bath, and afterwards sat down to table, without showing the least mistrust at what had been told him, and the next morning, at his levee, he said pleasantly to his courtiers, that if Sura had had any evil designs against him, he had missed the finest opportunity in the world.

Sura being dead, all the men of mark and distinction at Court strove who should succeed him in the Emperor's good graces. Hadrian, by his wit, knowledge, birth (and especially by the honour he had of being nearly allied to

¹ Dio. lib. 68.

the Emperor), seemed to have the best claims, but all his merit would have been insufficient, if Plotina had not come in very opportunely with her assistance. She spoke very warmly in his behalf, furthered his interests with so much dexterity, and knew so well how to turn the Emperor's heart towards him, that Trajan, who was always complaisant to the Empress, invested Hadrian with the consulship, appointed him governor of Syria, made him his confidant, though he could not prevail upon himself to trust him as he had done Sura, and preferred him to the distinguished post of leader of the army that was to serve against the Parthians, not in the least suspecting (as may well be imagined) that he was conferring all these benefits upon his wife's lover, whilst he only thought he was heaping favours upon his niece's husband.

I shall not enter into details of all that Trajan did in this war, which his ambition induced him to undertake, for that would lay me under the necessity of composing a history on purpose.¹ Plotina went with him into the East, together with the princess Matidia, and exhibited, in those remote countries, the same moderation and humility that she had done at Rome. The Emperor, however, was not always successful in his enterprises. The siege of Atræ put a stop to his conquests, for he was obliged to abandon that undertaking, after losing a great number of his men, especially in the last assault, where he fought in person, and gave ample evidence of his intrepidity; for, being piqued at the obstinate resistance of the enemy, he put off his imperial ornaments

¹ Dio. lib. 68.

to perform the duties of a common soldier, and took less care of himself than became his dignity.

This siege was the last of his exploits, for as soon as it was raised, he found himself indisposed, and it was thought that his illness was the effect of Hadrian's treason, but some imagined it to be a dropsical and paralytic disorder. Notwithstanding this illness, he resolved to return to Rome, being earnestly entreated by the Senate to come and receive the fruits of his victories. He left the command of the army with Hadrian, whom he had made governor of Syria, and set out for Rome, accompanied by the Empress and the princess Matidia, but upon their arrival at Selinus, a town in Cilicia,¹ the Emperor found himself much worse, because of the heat of the dog-days, and was not able to proceed. His disorder increased every day, and at last he was seized with a flux, which carried him off.

Plotina, who during Trajan's illness had leisure to provide against his death, took her measures accordingly, and contrived everything to the advantage of Hadrian, who was then at Antioch, and as she was afraid that his absence might be prejudicial to him, she omitted nothing that could possibly promote his interests. We have already observed that Trajan never really loved Hadrian, and far from naming him to succeed to the throne, had made up his mind to make no choice at all of a successor; whether it was in imitation of Alexander, whom he had taken for a model, or that he did not think Hadrian worthy of it, he left the Senate and the legions at liberty to act as they should judge proper in that affair.

¹ Afterwards called Trajanopolis.

Plotina considered how important it was to Hadrian to have it thought that Trajan had adopted and appointed him his successor, for she well knew that the respect the Senate and the troops had for Trajan would almost secure the Empire to whomsoever he should have pitched upon, but that, on the other hand, Hadrian was not loved and esteemed so much as to give him reason to flatter himself that he should be preferred to so many great men who were worthy of it. She took care not to press Trajan to name Hadrian for his successor, for fear his choice should have fallen upon some other person, or that her mentioning any such thing to him should have a contrary effect, and make him show his dislike to Hadrian. As soon, however, as the Emperor was dead, Plotina, who kept it very secret, sent in all haste for one of her courtiers, in whom she could place entire confidence, and having put him into Trajan's bed, caused a great number of senators and officers of distinction to come into the chamber, in whose hearing the pretended sick Emperor declared, with a faint and dying voice,¹ that he chose Hadrian for his successor.

Plotina immediately caused letters to be written to the Senate, to acquaint them with this, and as they could not be signed by Trajan, who was dead, she signed them herself, pretending that the Emperor was not able to do it, because of his extreme weakness; at the same time she despatched a courier to Antioch, to inform Hadrian of the Emperor's death.

This good Emperor was universally regretted by the whole Empire, and Rome never shed tears that were more sincere. Those of Plotina were certainly more

¹ Spartan. in Hadrian.

politic than otherwise; she found reasons for consolation in the kindness and esteem that Hadrian had for her. In the meantime she made, in public, all possible demonstrations of sorrow for her unspeakable loss, and after having caused the Emperor's body to be burnt at Selinus, and enclosed his ashes in a golden urn, she set out for Rome. Hadrian, who came with all speed from Antioch, carried the urn himself on board the ship, and then returned thither, not forgetting to offer the Empress the utmost acknowledgment of his gratitude.

Plotina and Matidia carried to Rome the precious remains of Trajan, with which they were entrusted. The urn was received by all the orders of the city with the greatest respect, and placed upon the superb column that Trajan himself had erected in the square, which is distinguished by his name. The Empress Plotina had the same power and authority that she had enjoyed during the reign of Trajan. Hadrian, who was beholden to her for the Empire, had that respect for her which he was obliged by all the ties of gratitude to have for his benefactress. But nothing could more testify his attachment to her, than the excessive grief he felt at her death. He appeared in deep mourning for nine days, erected a temple in her honour, composed a beautiful poem in praise of her, had her immortalised, and dedicated a magnificent mausoleum to her memory in the town of Nemausus,¹ the noble ruins of which are yet to be seen.

¹ Nîmes.

